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MODERN PAINTERS

VOLUME THE FIRST

OF GENERAL PRINCIPLES AND OF TRUTH

St. Mark's Edition

MODERN PAINTERS

IN FIVE VOLUMES

VOL. I.

OF GENERAL PRINCIPLES AND OF TRUTH

BY

JOHN RUSKIN

With Illustrations

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To

THE LANDSCAPE ARTISTS OF ENGLAND

THIS WORK

IS RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED

BY THEIR SINCERE ADMIRER

THE AUTHOR

PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION.

THE work now laid before the public originated in indignation at the shallow and false criticism of the periodicals of the day on the works of the great living artist to whom it principally refers. It was intended to be a short pamphlet, reprobating the matter and style of those critiques, and pointing out their perilous tendency, as guides of public feeling. But, as point after point presented itself for demonstration, I found myself compelled to amplify what was at first a letter to the Editor of a Review, into something very like a treatise on art, to which I was obliged to give the more consistency and completeness, because it advocated opinions which, to the ordinary connoisseur, will sound heretical. I now scarcely know whether I should announce it is an Essay on Landscape Painting, and apologize for its frequent reference to the works of a particular master; or, announcing it as a critique on particular works, apologize for its lengthy discussion of general principles. But of whatever character the work may be considered, the motives which led me to undertake it must not be mistaken. No zeal for the reputation of any individual, no personal feeling of any kind, has the slightest weight or influence with me. The reputation of the great artist to whose works I have chiefly referred, is established on too legitimate grounds among all whose admiration is honorable, to be in any way affected by the ignorant sar-

casms of pretension and affectation. But when *public* taste seems plunging deeper and deeper into degradation day by day, and when the press universally exerts such power as it possesses to direct the feeling of the nation more completely to all that is theatrical, affected, and false in art; while it vents its ribald buffooneries on the most exalted truth, and the highest ideal of landscape, that this or any other age has ever witnessed, it becomes the imperative duty of all who have any perception or knowledge of what is really great in art, and any desire for its advancement in England, to come fearlessly forward, regardless of such individual interests as are likely to be injured by the knowledge of what is good and right, to declare and demonstrate, wherever they exist, the essence and the authority of the Beautiful and the True.

Whatever may seem invidious or partial in the execution of my task is dependent not so much on the tenor of the work, as on its incompleteness. I have not entered into systematic criticism of all the painters of the present day; but I have illustrated each particular excellence and truth of art by the works in which it exists in the highest degree, resting satisfied that if it be once rightly felt and enjoyed in these, it will be discovered and appreciated wherever it exists in others. And although I have never suppressed any conviction of the superiority of one artist over another, which I believed to be grounded on truth, and necessary to the understanding of truth, I have been cautious never to undermine positive rank, while I disputed relative rank. My uniform desire and aim have been, not that the present favorite should be admired less, but that the neglected master should be admired more. And I know that an increased perception and sense of truth and beauty, though it may interfere with our estimate of the comparative rank of painters, will invariably tend to in-

crease our admiration of all who are really great; and he who now places Stanfield and Callcott above Turner, will admire Stanfield and Callcott more than he does now, when he has learned to place Turner far above them both.

In three instances only have I spoken in direct depreciation of the works of living artists, and these are all cases in which the reputation is so firm and extended, as to suffer little injury from the opinion of an individual, and where the blame has been warranted and deserved by the desecration of the highest powers.

Of the old masters I have spoken with far greater freedom; but let it be remembered that only a portion of the work is now presented to the public, and it must not be supposed, because in that particular portion, and with reference to particular excellencies, I have spoken in constant depreciation, that I have no feeling of other excellencies of which cognizance can only be taken in future parts of the work. Let me not be understood to mean more than I have said, nor be made responsible for conclusions when I have only stated facts. I have said that the old masters did not give the truth of Nature; if the reader chooses, thence, to infer that they were not masters at all, it is his conclusion, not mine.

Whatever I have asserted throughout the work, I have endeavored to ground altogether on demonstrations which must stand or fall by their own strength, and which ought to involve no more reference to authority or character than a demonstration in Euclid. Yet it is proper for the public to know, that the writer is no mere theorist, but has been devoted from his youth to the laborious study of practical art.

Whatever has been generally affirmed of the old schools of landscape-painting is founded on familiar acquaintance with every important work of art, from Antwerp to Naples. But it would be useless, where

close and immediate comparison with works in our own Academy is desirable, to refer to the details of pictures at Rome or Munich; and it would be impossible to speak at once with just feeling, as regarded the possessor, and just freedom, as regarded the public, of pictures in private galleries. Whatever particular references have been made for illustration, have been therefore confined, as far as was in my power, to works in the National and Dulwich Galleries.

Finally, I have to apologize for the imperfection of a work which I could have wished not to have executed, but with years of reflection and revisal. It is owing to my sense of the necessity of such revisal, that only a portion of the work is now presented to the public; but that portion is both complete in itself, and is more peculiarly directed against the crying evil which called for instant remedy. Whether I ever completely fulfil my intention, will partly depend upon the spirit in which the present volume is received. If it be attributed to an invidious spirit, or a desire for the advancement of individual interests, I could hope to effect little good by farther effort. If, on the contrary, its real feeling and intention be understood, I shall shrink from no labor in the execution of a task which may tend, however feebly, to the advancement of the cause of real art in England, and to the honor of those great living Masters whom we now neglect or malign, to pour our flattery into the ear of Death, and exalt, with vain acclamation, the names of those who neither demand our praise, nor regard our gratitude.

THE AUTHOR.

PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION.

It is allowed by the most able writers on naval and military tactics, that although the attack by successive divisions absolutely requires in the attacking party such an inherent superiority in quality of force, and such consciousness of that superiority, as may enable his front columns, or his leading ships, to support themselves for a considerable period against overwhelming numbers; it yet insures, if maintained with constancy, the most total ruin of the opposing force. Convinced of the truth, and therefore assured of the ultimate prevalence and victory of the principles which I have advocated, and equally confident that the strength of the cause must give weight to the strokes of even the weakest of its defenders, I permitted myself to yield to a somewhat hasty and hot-headed desire of being, at whatever risk, in the thick of the fire, and began the contest with a part, and that the weakest and least considerable part, of the forces at my disposal. And I now find the volume thus boldly laid before the public in a position much resembling that of the Royal Sovereign at Trafalgar, receiving, unsupported, the broadsides of half the enemy's fleet, while unforeseen circumstances have hitherto prevented, and must yet for a time prevent, my heavier ships of the line from taking any part in the action. I watched the first moments of the struggle with some anxiety for the solitary vessel,—an anxiety which I have now ceased to feel,

—for the flag of truth waves brightly through the smoke of the battle, and my antagonists, wholly intent on the destruction of the leading ship, have lost their position and exposed themselves in defenceless disorder to the attack of the following columns.

If, however, I have had no reason to regret my hasty advance, as far as regards the ultimate issue of the struggle, I have yet found it to occasion much misconception of the character, and some diminution of the influence, of the present essay. For though the work has been received as only in sanguine moments I had ventured to hope, though I have had the pleasure of knowing that in many instances its principles have carried with them a strength of conviction amounting to a demonstration of their truth, and that, even where it has had no other influence, it has excited interest, suggested inquiry, and prompted to a just and frank comparison of Art with Nature; yet this effect would have been greater still, had not the work been supposed, as it seems to have been by many readers, a completed treatise, containing a systematized statement of the whole of my views on the subject of modern art. Considered as such, it surprises me that the book should have received the slightest attention. For what respect could be due to a writer who pretended to criticise and classify the works of the great painters of landscape, without developing, or even alluding to, one single principle of the beautiful or sublime? So far from being a completed essay, it is little more than the introduction to the mass of evidence and illustration which I have yet to bring forward; it treats of nothing but the initiatory steps of art, states nothing but the elementary rules of criticism, touches only on merits attainable by accuracy of eye and fidelity of hand, and leaves for future consideration every one of the eclectic qualities of pictures, all of good that is prompted by feeling, and of great that is guided by judgment;

and its function and scope should the less have been mistaken, because I have not only most carefully arranged the subject in its commencement, but have given frequent references throughout to the essays by which it is intended to be succeeded, in which I shall endeavor to point out the signification and the value of those phenomena of external nature which I have been hitherto compelled to describe without reference either to their inherent beauty, or to the lessons which may be derived from them.

Yet, to prevent such misconception in future, I may perhaps be excused for occupying the reader's time with a fuller statement of the feelings with which the work was undertaken, of its general plan, and of the conclusions and positions which I hope to be able finally to deduce and maintain.

Nothing, perhaps, bears on the face of it more appearance of folly, ignorance, and impertinence, than any attempt to diminish the honor of those to whom the assent of many generations has assigned a throne; for the truly great of later times have, almost without exception, fostered in others the veneration of departed power which they felt themselves, satisfied in all humility to take their seat at the feet of those whose honor is brightened by the hoariness of time, and to wait for the period when the lustre of many departed days may accumulate on their own heads, in the radiance which culminates as it recedes. The envious and incompetent have usually been the leaders of attack, content if, like the foulness of the earth, they may attract to themselves notice by their noisomeness, or, like its insects, exalt themselves by virulence into visibility. While, however, the envy of the vicious, and the insolence of the ignorant, are occasionally shown in their nakedness by *futile* efforts to degrade the dead, it is worthy of consideration whether they may not more frequently escape detection in *suc-*

cessful efforts to degrade the living,—whether the very same malice may not be gratified, the very same incompetence demonstrated in the unjust lowering of present greatness, and the unjust exaltation of a perished power, as, if exerted and manifested in a less safe direction, would have classed the critic with Nero and Caligula, with Zoilus and Perrault. Be it remembered, that the spirit of detraction is detected only when unsuccessful, and receives least punishment where it effects the greatest injury; and it cannot but be felt that there is as much danger that the rising of new stars should be concealed by the mists which are unseen, as that those throned in heaven should be darkened by the clouds which are visible.

There is, I fear, so much malice in the hearts of most men, that they are chiefly jealous of that praise which can give the greatest pleasure, and are then most liberal of eulogium when it can no longer be enjoyed. They grudge not the whiteness of the sepulchre, because by no honor they can bestow upon it can the senseless corpse be rendered an object of envy; but they are niggardly of the reputation which contributes to happiness, or advances to fortune. They are glad to obtain credit for generosity and humility by exalting those who are beyond the reach of praise, and thus to escape the more painful necessity of doing homage to a living rival. They are rejoiced to set up a standard of imaginary excellence, which may enable them, by insisting on the inferiority of a contemporary work to the things that have been, to withdraw the attention from its superiority to the things that are. The same undercurrent of jealousy operates in our reception of animadversion. Men have commonly more pleasure in the criticism which hurts than in that which is innocuous, and are more tolerant of the severity which breaks hearts and ruins fortunes, than of that which falls impotently on the grave.

And thus well says the good and deep-minded Richard Hooker: "To the best and wisest, while they live, the world is continually a froward opposite; and a curious observer of their defects and imperfections, their virtues afterwards it as much admireth. And for this cause, many times that which deserveth admiration would hardly be able to find favor, if they which propose it were not content to profess themselves therein scholars and followers of the ancient. For the world will not endure to hear that we are wiser than any have been which went before."—Book v. ch. vii. 3. He, therefore, who would maintain the cause of contemporary excellence against that of elder time, must have almost every class of men arrayed against him. The generous, because they would not find matter of accusation against established dignities; the envious, because they like not the sound of a living man's praise; the wise, because they prefer the opinion of centuries to that of days; and the foolish, because they are incapable of forming an opinion of their own. Obloquy so universal is not lightly to be risked, and the few who make an effort to stem the torrent, as it is made commonly in favor of their own works, deserve the contempt which is their only reward. Nor is this to be regretted, in its influence on the progress and preservation of things technical and communicable. Respect for the ancients is the salvation of art, though it sometimes blinds us to its *ends*. It increases the power of the painter, though it diminishes his liberty; and if it be sometimes an encumbrance to the essays of invention, it is oftener a protection from the consequences of audacity. The whole system and discipline of art, the collected results of the experience of ages, might, but for the fixed authority of antiquity, be swept away by the rage of fashion, or lost in the glare of novelty; and the knowledge which it had taken centuries to accumulate, the principles which mighty minds had ar-

rived at only in dying, might be overthrown by the frenzy of a faction, and abandoned in the insolence of an hour.

Neither, in its general application, is the persuasion of the superiority of former works less just than useful. The greater number of them are, and must be, immeasurably nobler than any of the results of present effort, because that which is best of the productions of four thousand years must necessarily be, in its accumulation, beyond all rivalry from the works of any given generation; but it should always be remembered that it is improbable that many, and impossible that all, of such works, though the greatest yet produced, should approach abstract perfection; that there is certainly something left for us to carry farther, or complete; that any given generation has just the same chance of producing some individual mind of first-rate calibre, as any of its predecessors; and that if such a mind *should* arise, the chances are, that with the assistance of experience and example, it would, in its particular and chosen path, do greater things than had been before done.

We must therefore be cautious not to lose sight of the real use of what has been left us by antiquity, nor to take that for a model of perfection which is, in many cases, only a guide to it. The picture which is looked to for an interpretation of nature is invaluable, but the picture which is taken as a substitute for nature, had better be burned; and the young artist, while he should shrink with horror from the iconoclast who would tear from him every landmark and light which has been bequeathed him by the ancients, and leave him in a liberated childhood, may be equally certain of being betrayed by those who would give him the power and the knowledge of past time, and then fetter his strength from all advance, and bend his eyes backward on a beaten path—who would thrust canvass between him and the sky, and tradition between him and God.

And such conventional teaching is the more to be dreaded, because all that is highest in art, all that is creative and imaginative, is formed and created by every great master for himself, and cannot be repeated or imitated by others. We judge of the excellence of a rising writer, not so much by the resemblance of his works to what has been done before, as by their difference from it; and while we advise him, in his first trials of strength, to set certain models before him with respect to inferior points, —one for versification, another for arrangement, another for treatment,—we yet admit not his greatness until he has broken away from all his models, and struck forth versification, arrangement, and treatment of his own.

Three points, therefore, I would especially insist upon as necessary to be kept in mind in all criticism of modern art. First, that there are few, very few of even the best productions of antiquity, which are not visibly and palpably imperfect in some kind or way, and conceivably improvable by farther study; that every nation, perhaps every generation, has in all probability some peculiar gift, some particular character of mind, enabling it to do something different from, or something in some sort better than what has been before done; and that therefore, unless art be a trick, or a manufacture, of which the secrets are lost, the greatest minds of existing nations, if exerted with the same industry, passion, and honest aim as those of past time, have a chance in their particular walk of doing something as great, or, taking the advantage of former example into account, even greater and better. It is difficult to conceive by what laws of logic some of the reviewers of the following Essay have construed its first sentence into a denial of this principle,—a denial such as their own conventional and shallow criticism of modern works invariably implies. I have said that "nothing has been for centuries consecrated by public admiration without possessing in a

high degree *some* species of sterling excellence." Does it thence follow that it possesses in the *highest* degree *every* species of sterling excellence? "Yet thus," says the sapient reviewer, "he admits the fact against which he mainly argues,—namely, the superiority of these time-honored productions." As if the possession of an abstract excellence of some kind necessarily implied the possession of an incomparable excellence of every kind! There are few works of man so perfect as to admit of no conception of their being excelled,*—there are thousands which have been for centuries, and will be for centuries more, consecrated by public admiration, which are yet imperfect in many respects, and have been excelled, and may be excelled again. Do my opponents mean to assert that nothing good can ever be bettered, and that what is best of past time is necessarily best of all time? Perugino, I suppose, possessed some species of sterling excellence, but Perugino was excelled by Raffaelle; and so, Claude possesses some species of sterling excellence, but it follows not that he may not be excelled by Turner.

The second point on which I would insist is that if a mind *were* to arise of such power as to be capable of equalling or excelling some of the greatest works of past ages, the productions of such a mind would, in all probability, be totally different in manner and matter from all former productions; for the more powerful the intellect, the less will its works resemble those of other men, whether predecessors or contemporaries. Instead of reasoning, therefore, as we commonly do, in matters of art, that because such and such a work does not resemble that which has hitherto been a canon, therefore it *must*

* One or two fragments of Greek sculpture, the works of Michael Angelo, considered with reference to their general conception and power, and the Madonna di St. Sisto, are all that I should myself put into such a category, not that even these are without defect, but their defects are such as mortality could never hope to rectify.

be inferior and wrong in principle; let us rather admit that there is in its very dissimilarity an increased chance of its being itself a new, and perhaps, a higher canon. If any production of modern art can be shown to have the authority of nature on its side, and to be based on eternal truths, it is all so much more in its favor, so much farther proof of its power, that it is totally different from all that have been before seen.*

The third point on which I would insist, is that if such a mind were to arise, it would necessarily divide the world of criticism into two factions: the one, necessarily the largest and loudest, composed of men incapable of judging except by precedent, ignorant of general truth, and acquainted only with such particular truths as may have been illustrated or pointed out to them by former works, which class would of course be violent in vituperation, and increase in animosity as the master departed farther from their particular and preconceived canons of right,—thus wounding their vanity by impugning their judgment; the other, necessarily narrow of number, composed of men of general knowledge and unbiassed habits of thought, who would recognize in the work of the daring innovator a record and illustration of facts before unseized, who would justly and candidly estimate the value of the truths so rendered, and would increase in fervor

* This principle is dangerous, but not the less true, and necessary to be kept in mind. There is scarcely any truth which does not admit of being wrested to purposes of evil, and we must not deny the desirableness of originality, because men may err in seeking for it, or because a pretence to it may be made, by presumption, a cloak for its incompetence. Nevertheless, originality is never to be sought for its own sake —otherwise it will be mere aberration—it should arise naturally out of hard, independent study of nature; and it should be remembered that in many things technical, it is impossible to alter without being inferior, for therein, as says Spencer, "Truth is one, and right is ever one;" but wrongs are various and multitudinous. "Vice," says Byron, in Marino Faliero, "must have variety; but Virtue stands like the sun, and all which rolls around drinks life from her aspect."

of admiration as the master strode farther and deeper, and more daringly into dominions before unsearched or unknown; yet diminishing in multitude as they increased in enthusiasm: for by how much their leader became more impatient in his step—more impetuous in his success—more exalting in his research, by so much must the number capable of following him become narrower, until at last, supposing him never to pause in his advance, he might be left in the very culminating moment of his consummate achievement, with but a faithful few by his side, his former disciples fallen away, his former enemies doubled in numbers and virulence, and the evidence of his supremacy only to be wrought out by the devotion of men's lives to the earnest study of the new truths he had discovered and recorded.

Such a mind has arisen in our days. It has gone on from strength to strength, laying open fields of conquest peculiar to itself. It has occasioned such schism in the schools of criticism as was beforehand to be expected, and it is now at the zenith of its power, and, *consequently*, in the last phase of declining popularity.

This I know, and can prove. No man, says Southey, was ever yet convinced of any momentous truth without feeling in himself the power, as well as the desire of communicating it. In asserting and demonstrating the supremacy of this great master, I shall both do immediate service to the cause of right art, and shall be able to illustrate many principles of landscape painting which are of general application, and have hitherto been unacknowledged.

For anything like immediate effect on the public mind, I do not hope. "We mistake men's diseases," says Richard Baxter, "when we think there needeth nothing to cure them of their errors but the evidence of truth. Alas! there are many distempers of mind to be removed before they receive that evidence." Nevertheless, when

it is fully laid before them, my duty will be done. Conviction will follow in due time.

I do not consider myself as in any way addressing, or having to do with, the ordinary critics of the press. Their writings are not the guide, but the expression, of public opinion. A writer for a newspaper naturally and necessarily endeavors to meet, as nearly as he can, the feelings of the majority of his readers; his bread depends on his doing so. Precluded by the nature of his occupations from gaining any knowledge of art, he is sure that he can gain credit for it by expressing the opinions of his readers. He mocks the picture which the public pass, and bespatters with praise the canvas which a crowd concealed from him.

Writers like the present critic of Blackwood's Magazine* deserve more respect—the respect due to honest, hopeless, helpless imbecility. There is something exalted in the innocence of their feeble-mindedness: one cannot suspect them of partiality, for it implies feeling; nor of prejudice, for it implies some previous acquaintance with their subject. I do not know that even in this age of charlatanry, I could point to a more barefaced instance of imposture on the simplicity of the public, than the insertion of these pieces of criticism in a respectable periodical. We are not insulted with opin-

*It is with regret that, in a work of this nature, I take notice of criticisms, which, after all, are merely intended to amuse the careless reader, and be forgotten as soon as read; but I do so in compliance with wishes expressed to me since the publication of this work, by persons who have the interests of art deeply at heart, and who, I find, attach more importance to the matter than I should have been disposed to do. I have, therefore, marked two or three passages which may enable the public to judge for themselves of the quality of these critiques; and this I think a matter of justice to those who might otherwise have been led astray by them—more than this I cannot consent to do. I should have but a hound's office if I had to tear the tabard from every Rouge Sanglier of the arts—with bell and bauble to back him.

ions on music from persons ignorant of its notes; nor with treatises on philology by persons unacquainted with the alphabet; but here is page after page of criticism, which one may read from end to end, looking for something which the writer knows, and finding nothing. Not his own language, for he has to look in his dictionary, by his own confession, for a word * occurring in one of the most important chapters of his Bible; not the commonest traditions of the schools, for he does not know why Poussin was called "learned;" † not the most simple canons of art, for he prefers Lee to Gainsborough; ‡

* Chrysoprase (Vide No. for October, 1842, p. 502).

† Every school-boy knows that this epithet was given to Poussin in allusion to the profound classical knowledge of the painter. The reviewer, however (September, 1841), informs us that the expression refers to his skill in "Composition."

‡ Critique on Royal Academy, 1842. "He" (Mr. Lee) "often reminds us of Gainsborough's best manner; but he is *superior* to him always in subject, composition, and variety."—Shade of Gainsborough! —deep-thoughted, solemn Gainsborough—forgive us for re-writing this sentence; we do so to gibbet its perpetrator forever,—and leave him swinging in the winds of the Fool's Paradise. It is with great pain that I ever speak with severity of the works of living masters, especially when, like Mr. Lee's, they are well-intentioned, simple, free from affectation or imitation, and evidently painted with constant reference to nature. But I believe that these qualities will always secure him that admiration which he deserves—that there will be many unsophisticated and honest minds always ready to follow his guidance, and answer his efforts with delight; and therefore, that I need not fear to point out in him the want of those technical qualities which are more especially the object of an artist's admiration. Gainsborough's power of color (it is mentioned by Sir Joshua as his peculiar gift) is capable of taking rank beside that of Rubens; he is the purest colorist—Sir Joshua himself not excepted—of the whole English school; with him, in fact, the *art* of painting did in great part die, and exists not now in Europe. Evidence enough will be seen in the following pages of my devoted admiration of Turner; but I hesitate not to say, that in management and quality of single and particular tint, in the purely technical part of painting, Turner is a child of Gainsborough. Now, Mr. Lee never aims at color; he does not make it his object in the slightest degree—the spring green of

not the most ordinary facts of nature, for we find him puzzled by the epithet "silver," as applied to the orange blossom,—evidently never having seen anything silvery about an orange in his life, except a spoon. Nay, he leaves us not to conjecture his calibre from internal evidence; he candidly tells us (Oct. 1842) that he has been studying trees only for the last week, and bases his critical remarks chiefly on his practical experience of birch. More disinterested than our friend Sancho, he would disenchant the public from the magic of Turner by virtue of his own flagellation; Xanthias-like, he would rob

vegetation is all that he desires; and it would be about as rational to compare his works with studied pieces of coloring, as the modulation of the Calabrian pipe to the harmony of a full orchestra. Gainsborough's hand is as light as the sweep of a cloud—as swift as the flash of a sunbeam; Lee's execution is feeble and spotty. Gainsborough's masses are as broad as the first division in heaven of light from darkness; Lee's (perhaps necessarily, considering the effects of flickering sunlight at which he aims) are as fragmentary as his leaves, and as numerous. Gainsborough's forms are grand, simple, and ideal; Lee's are small, confused, and unselected. Gainsborough never loses sight of his picture as a whole; Lee is but too apt to be shackled by its parts. In a word, Gainsborough is an immortal painter; and Lee, though on the right road, is yet in the early stages of his art; and the man who could imagine any resemblance or point of comparison between them, is not only a novice in art, but has not capacity ever to be anything more. He may be pardoned for not comprehending Turner, for long preparation and discipline are necessary before the abstract and profound philosophy of that artist can be met; but Gainsborough's excellence is based on principles of art long acknowledged, and facts of nature universally apparent; and I insist more particularly on the reviewer's want of feeling for his works, because it proves a truth of which the public ought especially to be assured that those who lavish abuse on the great men of modern times, are equally incapable of perceiving the real excellence of established canons, are ignorant of the commonest and most acknowledged principia of the art, blind to the most palpable and comprehensible of its beauties, incapable of distinguishing, if left to themselves, a master's work from the vilest school copy, and founding their applause of those great works which they praise, either in pure hypocrisy, or in admiration of their defects.

his master of immortality by his own powers of endurance. What is Christopher North about? Does he receive his critiques from Eton or Harrow—based on the experience of a week's birds'-nesting and its consequences? How low must art and its interests sink, when the public mind is inadequate to the detection of this effrontery of incapacity! In all kindness to Maga, we warn her, that, though the nature of this work precludes us from devoting space to the exposure, there may come a time when the public shall be themselves able to distinguish ribaldry from reasoning, and may require some better and higher qualifications in their critics of art, than the experience of a school-boy, and the capacities of a buffoon.

It is not, however, merely to vindicate the reputation of those whom writers like these defame, which would but be to anticipate by a few years the natural and inevitable reaction of the public mind, that I am devoting years of labor to the development of the principles on which the great productions of recent art are based. I have a higher end in view—one which may, I think, justify me, not only in the sacrifice of my own time, but in calling on my readers to follow me through an investigation far more laborious than could be adequately rewarded by mere insight into the merits of a particular master, or the spirit of a particular age.

It is a question which, in spite of the claims of Painting to be called the Sister of Poetry, appears to me to admit of considerable doubt, whether art has ever, except in its earliest and rudest stages, possessed anything like efficient moral influence on mankind. Better the state of Rome when "magnorum artificum frangebat pocula miles, ut phaleris gauderet equus," than when her walls flashed with the marble and the gold, "nec cessabat luxuria id agere, ut quam plurimum incendiis perdat." Better the state of religion in Italy, before Giotto had

broken on one barbarism of the Byzantine schools, than when the painter of the Last Judgment, and the sculptor of the Perseus, sat revelling side by side. It appears to me that a rude symbol is oftener more efficient than a refined one in touching the heart, and that as pictures rise in rank as works of art, they are regarded with less devotion and more curiosity.

But, however this may be, and whatever influence we may be disposed to admit in the great works of sacred art, no doubt can, I think, be reasonably entertained as to the utter inutility of all that has been hitherto accomplished by the painters of landscape. No moral end has been answered, no permanent good effected, by any of their works. They may have amused the intellect, or exercised the ingenuity, but they never have spoken to the heart. Landscape art has never taught us one deep or holy lesson; it has not recorded that which is fleeting, nor penetrated that which was hidden, nor interpreted that which was obscure; it has never made us feel the wonder, nor the power, nor the glory, of the universe; it has not prompted to devotion, nor touched with awe; its power to move and exalt the heart has been fatally abused, and perished in the abusing. That which ought to have been a witness to the omnipotence of God, has become an exhibition of the dexterity of man, and that which should have lifted our thoughts to the throne of the Deity, has encumbered them with the inventions of his creatures.

If we stand for a little time before any of the more celebrated works of landscape, listening to the comments of the passers-by, we shall hear numberless expressions relating to the skill of the artist, but very few relating to the perfection of nature. Hundreds will be voluble in admiration, for one who will be silent in delight. Multitudes will laud the composition, and depart with the praise of Claude on their lips,—not one will feel as if

it were *no* composition, and depart with the praise of God in his heart.

These are the signs of a debased, mistaken, and false school of painting. The skill of the artist, and the perfection of his art, are never proved until both are forgotten. The artist has done nothing till he has concealed himself,—the art is imperfect which is visible,—the feelings are but feebly touched, if they permit us to reason on the methods of their excitement. In the reading of a great poem, in the hearing of a noble oration, it is the subject of the writer, and not his skill,—his passion, not his power, on which our minds are fixed. We see as he sees, but we see not him. We become part of him, feel with him, judge, behold with him; but we think *of* him as little as of ourselves. Do we think of Æschylus while we wait on the silence of Cassandra,* or of Shakspeare, while we listen to the wailing of Lear? Not so. The power of the masters is shown by their self-annihilation. It is commensurate with the degree in which they themselves appear not in their work. The harp of the minstrel is untruly touched, if his own glory is all that it records. Every great writer may be at once known by his guiding the mind far from himself, to the beauty which is not of his creation, and the knowledge which is past his finding out.

And must it ever be otherwise with painting, for otherwise it has ever been. Her subjects have been regarded

* There is a fine touch in the Frogs in Aristophanes, alluding probably to this part of the Agamemnon. "Ἐγὼ δ' ἔχαιρον τῇ σιωπῇ καὶ μᾶ τοῖτ' ἔτερπεν οὐκ ἧττον ἢ νῦν δι λαλοῦντες." The same remark might be well applied to the seemingly vacant or incomprehensible portions of Turner's canvas. In their mysterious and intense fire, there is much correspondence between the mind of Æschylus and that of our great painter. They share at least one thing in common—unpopularity. Ὁ δημος ἀνεβόα κρίσιν ποιεῖν ΞΑ. ὁ τῶν πανοὐργων; ΑΙ. νη Δι. οὐράνιον γ' ὅσον. ΞΑ. μετ' Αἰσχύλου δ' οὐκ ἦσαν ἕτεροι σύμμαχοι ΑΙ. ὀλίγον τὸ χρηστόν ἐττιν.

as mere themes on which the artist's power is to be displayed; and that power, be it of imitation, composition, idealization, or of whatever other kind, is the chief object of the spectator's observation. It is man and his fancies, man and his trickeries, man and his inventions,—poor, paltry, weak, self-sighted man,—which the connoisseur forever seeks and worships. Among potsherds and dunghills, among drunken boors and withered beldames, through every scene of debauchery and degradation, we follow the erring artist, not to receive one wholesome lesson, not to be touched with pity, nor moved with indignation, but to watch the dexterity of the pencil, and gloat over the glittering of the hue.

I speak not only of the works of the Flemish school — I wage no war with their admirers; they may be left in peace to count the spiculæ of haystacks and the hairs of donkeys—it is also of works of real mind that I speak,—works in which there are evidences of genius and workings of power,—works which have been held up as containing all of the beautiful that art can reach or man conceive. And I assert with sorrow, that all hitherto done in landscape, by those commonly conceived its masters, has never prompted one holy thought in the minds of nations. It has begun and ended in exhibiting the dexterities of individuals, and conventionalities of systems. Filling the world with the honor of Claude and Salvator, it has never once tended to the honor of God.

Does the reader start in reading these last words, as if they were those of wild enthusiasm,—as if I were lowering the dignity of religion by supposing that its cause could be advanced by such means? His surprise proves my position. It *does* sound like wild, like absurd enthusiasm, to expect any definite moral agency in the painters of landscape; but ought it so to sound? Are the gorgeousness of the visible hue, the glory of the real-

ized form, instruments in the artist's hand so ineffective, that they can answer no nobler purpose than the amusement of curiosity, or the engagement of idleness? Must it not be owing to gross neglect or misapplication of the means at his command, that while words and tones (means of representing nature surely less powerful than lines and colors) can kindle and purify the very inmost souls of men, the painter can only hope to entertain by his efforts at expression, and must remain forever brooding over his incommunicable thoughts?

The cause of the evil lies, I believe, deep-seated in the system of ancient landscape art; it consists, in a word, in the painter's taking upon him to modify God's works at his pleasure, casting the shadow of himself on all he sees, constituting himself arbiter where it is honor to be a disciple, and exhibiting his ingenuity by the attainment of combinations whose highest praise is that they are impossible. We shall not pass through a single gallery of old art, without hearing this topic of praise confidently advanced. The sense of artificialness, the absence of all appearance of reality, the clumsiness of combination by which the meddling of man is made evident, and the feebleness of his hand branded on the inorganization of his monstrous creature, is advanced as a proof of inventive power, as an evidence of abstracted conception;—nay, the violation of specific form, the utter abandonment of all organic and individual character of object, (numberless examples of which from the works of the old masters are given in the following pages,) is constantly held up by the unthinking critic as the foundation of the grand or historical style, and the first step to the attainment of a pure ideal. Now, there is but one grand style, in the treatment of all subjects whatsoever, and that style is based on the *perfect* knowledge, and consists in the simple, unencumbered rendering, of the specific characters of the given object, be it man, beast,

or flower. Every change, caricature, or abandonment of such specific character, is as destructive of grandeur as it is of truth, of beauty as of propriety. Every alteration of the features of nature has its origin either in powerless indolence or blind audacity, in the folly which forgets, or the insolence which desecrates, works which it is the pride of angels to know, and their privilege to love.

We sometimes hear such infringement of universal laws justified on the plea, that the frequent introduction of mythological abstractions into ancient landscape requires an imaginary character of form in the material objects with which they are associated. Something of this kind is hinted in Reynolds's 14th Discourse; but nothing can be more false than such reasoning. If there be any truth or beauty in the original conception of the spiritual being so introduced, there must be a true and real connection between that abstract idea* and the features of nature as she was and is. The woods and waters which were peopled by the Greek with typical life were not different from those which now wave and murmur by the ruins of his shrines. With their visible and actual forms was his imagination filled, and the beauty of its

* I do not know any passage in ancient literature in which this connection is more exquisitely illustrated than in the lines, burlesque though they be, descriptive of the approach of the chorus in the Clouds of Aristophanes—a writer, by the way, who, I believe, knew and felt more of the noble landscape character of his country than any whose works have come down to us except Homer. The individuality and distinctness of conception — the visible cloud character which every word of this particular passage brings out into more dewy and bright existence, are to me as refreshing as the real breathing of mountain winds. The line "διὰ τῶν κοίλων καὶ τῶν δασέων, πλάγιαι," could have been written by none but an ardent lover of hill scenery—one who had watched, hour after hour, the peculiar oblique, sidelong action of descending clouds, as they form along the hollows and ravines of the hills. There are no lumpish solidities—no pillowy protuberances here. All is melting, drifting, evanescent—full of air, and light, and dew.

incarnate creatures can only be understood among the pure realities which originally modelled their conception. If divinity be stamped upon the features, or apparent in the form of the spiritual creature, the mind will not be shocked by its appearing to ride upon the whirlwind, and trample on the storm; but if mortality, no violation of the characters of the earth will forge one single link to bind it to the heaven.

Is there then no such thing as elevated ideal character of landscape? Undoubtedly; and Sir Joshua, with the great master of this character, Nicolo Poussin, present to his thoughts, ought to have arrived at more true conclusions respecting its essence than, as we shall presently see, are deducible from his works. The true ideal of landscape is precisely the same as that of the human form; it is the expression of the specific—not the individual, but the specific—characters of every object, in their perfection; there is an ideal form of every herb, flower, and tree: it is that form to which every individual of the species has a tendency to arrive, freed from the influence of accident or disease. Every landscape painter should know the specific characters of every object he has to represent, rock, flower, or cloud; and in his highest ideal works, all their distinctions will be perfectly expressed, broadly or delicately, slightly or completely, according to the nature of the subject, and the degree of attention which is to be drawn to the particular object by the part it plays in the composition. Where the sublime is aimed at, such distinctions will be indicated with severe simplicity, as the muscular markings in a colossal statue; where beauty is the object, they must be expressed with the utmost refinement of which the hand is capable.

This may sound like a contradiction of principles advanced by the highest authorities; but it is only a contradiction of a particular and most mistaken application

of them. Much evil has been done to art by the remarks of historical painters on landscape. Accustomed themselves to treat their backgrounds slightly and boldly, and feeling (though, as I shall presently show, only in consequence of their own deficient powers) that any approach to completeness of detail therein, injures their picture by interfering with its principal subject, they naturally lose sight of the peculiar and intrinsic beauties of things which to them are injurious, unless subordinate. Hence the frequent advice given by Reynolds and others, to neglect *specific* form in landscape, and treat its materials in large masses, aiming only at general truths,—the flexibility of foliage, but not its kind; the rigidity of rock, but not its mineral character. In the passage more especially bearing on this subject (in the eleventh lecture of Sir J. Reynolds), we are told that "the landscape painter works not for the virtuoso or the naturalist, but for the general observer of life and nature." This is true, in precisely the same sense that the sculptor does not work for the anatomist, but for the common observer of life and nature. Yet the sculptor is not, for this reason, permitted to be wanting either in knowledge or expression of anatomical detail; and the more refined that expression can be rendered, the more perfect is his work. That which, to the anatomist, is the end,—is, to the sculptor, the means. The former desires details, for their own sake; the latter, that by means of them, he may kindle his work with life, and stamp it with beauty. And so in landscape;—botanical or geological details are not to be given as matter of curiosity or subject of search, but as the ultimate elements of every species of expression and order of loveliness.

In his observations on the foreground of the St. Pietro Martire, Sir Joshua advances, as matter of praise, that the plants are discriminated "just as much as was necessary for variety, and no more." Had this foreground

been occupied by a group of animals, we should have been surprised to be told that the lion, the serpent, and the dove, or whatever other creatures might have been introduced, were distinguished from each other just as much as was necessary for variety, and no more. Yet is it to be supposed that the distinctions of the vegetable world are less complete, less essential, or less divine in origin, than those of the animal? If the distinctive forms of animal life are meant for our reverent observance, is it likely that those of vegetable life are made merely to be swept away? The latter are indeed less obvious and less obtrusive; for which very reason there is less excuse for omitting them, because there is less danger of their disturbing the attention or engaging the fancy.

But Sir Joshua is as inaccurate in fact, as false in principle. He himself furnishes a most singular instance of the very error of which he accuses Vaseni,—the seeing what he expects; or, rather, in the present case, not seeing what he does not expect. The great masters of Italy, almost without exception, and Titian perhaps more than any (for he had the highest knowledge of landscape), are in the constant habit of rendering every detail of their foregrounds with the most laborious botanical fidelity: witness the "Bacchus and Ariadne," in which the foreground is occupied by the common blue iris, the aquilegia, and the wild rose; *every stamen* of which latter is given, while the blossoms and leaves of the columbine (a difficult flower to draw) have been studied with the most exquisite accuracy. The foregrounds of Raffaelle's two cartoons—"The Miraculous Draught of Fishes" and "The Charge to Peter"—are covered with plants of the common sea colewort (*crambe maritima*), of which the sinuated leaves and clustered blossoms would have exhausted the patience of any other artist; but have appeared worthy of prolonged and thoughtful labor to the great mind of Raffaelle.

It appears then, not only from natural principles, but from the highest of all authority, that thorough knowledge of the lowest details is necessary and full expression of them right, even in the highest class of historical painting; that it will not take away from, nor interfere with, the interest of the figures; but, rightly managed, must add to and elucidate it; and, if further proof be wanting, I would desire the reader to compare the background of Sir Joshua's "Holy Family," in the National Gallery, with that of Nicolo Poussin's "Nursing of Jupiter," in the Dulwich Gallery. The first, owing to the utter neglect of all botanical detail, has lost every atom of ideal character, and reminds us of nothing but an English fashionable flower garden;—the formal pedestal adding considerably to the effect. Poussin's, in which every vine leaf is drawn with consummate skill and untiring diligence, produces not only a tree group of the most perfect grace and beauty, but one which, in its pure and simple truth, belongs to every age of nature, and adapts itself to the history of all time. If, then, such entire rendering of specific character be necessary to the historical painter, in cases where these lower details are entirely subordinate to his human subject, how much more must it be necessary in landscape, where they themselves constitute the subject, and where the undivided attention is to be drawn to them.

There is a singular sense in which the child may peculiarly be said to be father of the man. In many arts and attainments, the first and last stages of progress—the infancy and the consummation—have many features in common; while the intermediate stages are wholly unlike either, and are farthest from the right. Thus it is in the progress of a painter's handling. We see the perfect child,—the absolute beginner, using of necessity a broken, imperfect, inadequate line, which, as he advances, becomes gradually firm, severe, and decided. Yet

before he becomes a perfect artist, this severity and decision will again be exchanged for a light and careless stroke, which in many points will far more resemble that of his childhood than of his middle age—differing from it only by the consummate effect wrought out by the apparently inadequate means. So it is in many matters of opinion. Our first and last coincide, though on different grounds; it is the middle stage which is farthest from the truth. Childhood often holds a truth with its feeble fingers, which the grasp of manhood cannot retain,—which it is the pride of utmost age to recover.

Perhaps this is in no instance more remarkable than in the opinion we form upon the subject of detail in works of art. Infants in judgment, we look for specific character, and complete finish—we delight in the faithful plumage of the well-known bird—in the finely drawn leafage of the discriminated flower. As we advance in judgment, we scorn such detail altogether; we look for impetuosity of execution, and breadth of effect. But, perfected in judgment, we return in a great measure to our early feelings, and thank Raffaelle for the shells upon his sacred beach, and for the delicate stamens of the herbage beside his inspired St. Catherine.*

Of those who take interest in art, nay, even of artists themselves, there are an hundred in the middle stage of judgment, for one who is in the last; and this not because they are destitute of the power to discover or the sensibility to enjoy the truth, but because the truth bears so much semblance of error—the last stage of the journey to the first,—that every feeling which guides to it is checked in its origin. The rapid and powerful artist necessarily looks with such contempt on those who

* Let not this principle be confused with Fuseli's, "love for what is called deception in painting marks either the infancy or decrepitude of a nation's taste." Realization to the mind necessitates not deception of the eye.

seek minutiæ of detail *rather* than grandeur of impression, that it is almost impossible for him to conceive of the great last step in art, by which both become compatible. He has so often to dash the delicacy out of the pupil's work, and to blot the details from his encumbered canvas; so frequently to lament the loss of breadth and unity, and so seldom to reprehend the imperfection of minutiæ, that he necessarily looks upon complete *parts* as the very sign of error, weakness and ignorance. Thus, frequently to the latest period of his life, he separates, like Sir Joshua, as chief enemies, the details and the whole, which an artist cannot be great unless he reconciles; and because details alone, and unreferred to a final purpose, are the sign of a tyro's work, he loses sight of the remoter truth, that details perfect in unity, and contributing to a final purpose, are the sign of the production of a consummate master.

It is not, therefore, detail sought for its own sake,—not the calculable bricks of the Dutch house-painters, nor the numbered hairs and mapped wrinkles of Denner, which constitute great art,—they are the lowest and most contemptible art; but it is detail referred to a great end,—sought for the sake of the inestimable beauty which exists in the slightest and least of God's works, and treated in a manly, broad and impressive manner. There may be as much greatness of mind, as much nobility of manner in a master's treatment of the smallest features, as in his management of the most vast; and this greatness of manner chiefly consists in seizing the specific character of the object, together with all the great qualities of beauty which it has in common with higher orders of existence,* while he utterly rejects the

* I shall show, in a future portion of the work, that there are principles of universal beauty common to all the creatures of God; and that it is by the greater or less share of these that one form becomes nobler or meaner than another.

meaner beauties which are accidentally peculiar to the object, and yet not specifically characteristic of it. I cannot give a better instance than the painting of the flowers in Titian's picture above mentioned. While every stamen of the rose is given, because this was necessary to mark the flower, and while the curves and large characters of the leaves are rendered with exquisite fidelity, there is no vestige of particular texture, of moss, bloom, moisture, or any other accident—no dew-drops, nor flies, nor trickeries of any kind; nothing beyond the simple forms and hues of the flowers,—even those hues themselves being simplified and broadly rendered. The varieties of aquilegia have, in reality, a grayish and uncertain tone of color; and, I believe, never attain the intense purity of blue with which Titian has gifted his flower. But the master does not aim at the particular color of individual blossoms; he seizes the type of all, and gives it with the utmost purity and simplicity of which color is capable.

These laws being observed, it will not only be in the power, it will be the duty,—the imperative duty,—of the landscape painter, to descend to the lowest details with undiminished attention. Every herb and flower of the field has its specific, distinct, and perfect beauty; it has its peculiar habitation, expression and function. The highest art is that which seizes this specific character, which develops and illustrates it, which assigns to it its proper position in the landscape, and which, by means of it, enhances and enforces the great impression which the picture is intended to convey. Nor is it of herbs and flowers alone that such scientific representation is required. Every class of rock, every kind of earth, every form of cloud, must be studied with equal industry, and rendered with equal precision. And thus we find ourselves unavoidably led to a conclusion directly opposed to that constantly enunciated dogma of the

parrot-critic, that the features of nature must be "generalized,"—a dogma whose inherent and broad absurdity would long ago have been detected, if it had not contained in its convenient falsehood an apology for indolence, and a disguise for incapacity. Generalized! As if it were possible to generalize things generically different. Of such common cant of criticism I extract a characteristic passage from one of the reviews of this work, that in this year's Athenæum for February 10th: "He (the author) would have geological landscape painters, dendrologic, meteorologic, and doubtless entomologic, ichthyologic, every kind of physiologic painter united in the same person; yet, alas, for true poetic art among all these learned Thebans! No; landscape painting must not be reduced to mere portraiture of inanimate substances, Denner-like portraiture of the earth's face. * * * * * Ancient landscapists took a broader, deeper, higher view of their art; they neglected particular traits, and gave only general features. Thus they attained mass and force, harmonious union and simple effect, the elements of grandeur and beauty."

To all such criticism as this (and I notice it only because it expresses the feelings into which many sensible and thoughtful minds have been fashioned by infection) the answer is simple and straightforward. It is just as impossible to generalize granite and slate, as it is to generalize a man and a cow. An animal must be either one animal or another animal; it cannot be a general animal, or it is no animal; and so a rock must be either one rock or another rock; it cannot be a general rock, or it is no rock. If there were a creature in the foreground of a picture, of which he could not decide whether it were a pony or a pig, the Athenæum critic would perhaps affirm it to be a generalization of pony and pig, and consequently a high example of "harmonious union and simple effect." But *I* should call it simple bad drawing.

And so when there are things in the foreground of Salvator of which I cannot pronounce whether they be granite or slate, or tufa, I affirm that there is in them neither harmonious union nor simple effect, but simple monstrosity. There is no grandeur, no beauty of any sort or kind; nothing but destruction, disorganization, and ruin, to be obtained by the violation of natural distinctions. The elements of brutes can only mix in corruption, the elements of inorganic nature only in annihilation. We may, if we choose, put together centaur monsters; but they must still be half man, half horse; they cannot be both man and horse, nor either man or horse. And so, if landscape painters choose, they may give us rocks which shall be half granite and half slate; but they cannot give us rocks which shall be either granite or slate, nor which shall be both granite and slate. Every attempt to produce that which shall be *any* rock, ends in the production of that which is *no* rock.

It is true that the distinctions of rocks and plants and clouds are less conspicuous, and less constantly subjects of observation than those of the animal creation; but the difficulty of observing them proves not the merit of overlooking them. It only accounts for the singular fact, that the world has never yet seen anything like a perfect school of landscape. For just as the highest historical painting is based on perfect knowledge of the workings of the human form and human mind, so must the highest landscape painting be based on perfect cognizance of the form, functions, and system of every organic or definitely structured existence which it has to represent. This proposition is self-evident to every thinking mind; and every principle which appears to contradict it is either misstated or misunderstood. For instance, the Athenæum critic calls the right statement of generic difference "*Denner*-like portraiture." If he can find anything like Denner in what I have advanced

as the utmost perfection of landscape art—the recent works of Turner—he is welcome to his discovery and his theory. No; Denner-like portraiture would be the endeavor to paint the separate crystals of quartz and felspar in the granite, and the separate flakes of mica in the mica-slate,—an attempt just as far removed from what I assert to be great art, (the bold rendering of the generic characters of form in both rocks,) as modern sculpture of lace and button-holes is from the Elgin marbles. Martin has attempted this Denner-like portraiture of sea-foam with the assistance of an acre of canvas—with what success, I believe the critics of his last year's Canute had, for once, sense enough to decide.

Again, it does not follow that because such accurate knowledge is *necessary* to the painter, that it should constitute the painter, nor that such knowledge is valuable in itself, and without reference to high ends. Every kind of knowledge may be sought from ignoble motives, and for ignoble ends; and in those who so possess it, it is ignoble knowledge; while the very same knowledge is in another mind an attainment of the highest dignity, and conveying the greatest blessing. This is the difference between the mere botanist's knowledge of plants, and the great poet's or painter's knowledge of them. The one notes their distinctions for the sake of swelling his herbarium, the other, that he may render them vehicles of expression and emotion. The one counts the stamens, and affixes a name, and is content; the other observes every character of the plant's color and form; considering each of its attributes as an element of expression, he seizes on its lines of grace or energy, rigidity or repose; notes the feebleness or the vigor, the serenity or tremulousness of its hues; observes its local habits, its love or fear of peculiar places, its nourishment or destruction by particular influences; he associates it in his mind with all the features of the

situations it inhabits, and the ministering agencies necessary to its support. Thenceforward the flower is to him a living creature, with histories written on its leaves, and passions breathing in its motion. Its occurrence in his picture is no mere point of color, no meaningless spark of light. It is a voice rising from the earth,—a new chord of the mind's music,—a necessary note in the harmony of his picture, contributing alike to its tenderness and its dignity, nor less to its loveliness than its truth.

The particularization of flowers by Shakspeare and Shelley affords us the most frequent examples of the exalted use of these inferior details. It is true that the painter has not the same power of expressing the thoughts with which his symbols are connected; he is dependent in some degree on the knowledge and feeling of the spectator; but, by the destruction of such details, his foreground is not rendered more intelligible to the ignorant, although it ceases to have interest for the informed. It is no excuse for illegible writing that there are persons who could not have read it had it been plain.

I repeat, then, generalization, as the word is commonly understood, is the act of a vulgar, incapable, and unthinking mind. To see in all mountains nothing but similar heaps of earth; in all rocks, nothing but similar concretions of solid matter; in all trees, nothing but similar accumulations of leaves, is no sign of high feeling or extended thought. The more we know, and the more we feel, the more we separate; we separate to obtain a more perfect unity. Stones, in the thoughts of the peasant, lie as they do on his field, one is like another, and there is no connection between any of them. The geologist distinguishes, and in distinguishing connects them. Each becomes different from its fellow, but in differing from, assumes a relation to its fellow

they are no more each the repetition of the other,—they are parts of a system, and each implies and is connected with the existence of the rest. That generalization then is right, true, and noble, which is based on the knowledge of the distinctions and observance of the relations of individual kinds. That generalization is wrong, false, and contemptible, which is based on ignorance of the one, and disturbance of the other. It is indeed no generalization, but confusion and chaos; it is the generalization of a defeated army into indistinguishable impotence—the generalization of the elements of a dead carcass into dust.

Let us, then, without farther notice of the dogmata of the schools of art, follow forth those conclusions to which we are led by observance of the laws of nature.

I have just said that every class of rock, earth and cloud, must be known by the painter, with geologic and meteorologic accuracy.* Nor is this merely for the sake of obtaining the character of these minor features themselves, but more especially for the sake of reaching that simple, earnest, and consistent character which is visible in the *whole* effect of every natural landscape. Every geological formation has features entirely peculiar to itself; definite lines of fracture, giving rise to fixed resultant forms of rock and earth; peculiar vegetable prod-

* Is not this—it may be asked—demanding more from him than life can accomplish? Not one whit. Nothing more than knowledge of external characteristics is absolutely required; and even if, which were more desirable, thorough scientific knowledge had to be attained, the time which our artists spend in multiplying crude sketches, or finishing their unintelligent embryos of the study, would render them masters of every science that modern investigations have organized, and familiar with every form that Nature manifests. Martin, if the time which he must have spent on the abortive bubbles of his Canute had been passed in working on the seashore, might have learned enough to enable him to produce, with a few strokes, a picture which would have smote like the sound of the sea, upon men's hearts forever.

ucts, among which still farther distinctions are wrought out by variations of climate and elevation. From such modifying circumstances arise the infinite varieties of the orders of landscape, of which each one shows perfect harmony among its several features, and possesses an ideal beauty of its own; a beauty not distinguished merely by such peculiarities as are wrought on the human form by change of climate, but by generic differences the most marked and essential; so that its classes cannot be generalized or amalgamated by any expedients whatsoever. The level marshes and rich meadows of the tertiary, the rounded swells and short pastures of the chalk, the square-built cliffs and cloven dells of the lower limestone, the soaring peaks and ridgy precipices of the primaries, having nothing in common among them—nothing which is not distinctive and incommunicable. Their very atmospheres are different—their clouds are different—their humors of storm and sunshine are different—their flowers, animals, and forests are different. By each order of landscape—and its orders, I repeat, are infinite in number, corresponding not only to the several species of rock, but to the particular circumstances of the rocks' deposition or after treatment, and to the incalculable varieties of climate, aspect, and human interference:—by each order of landscape, I say, peculiar lessons are intended to be taught, and distinct pleasures to be conveyed; and it is as utterly futile to talk of generalizing their impressions into an ideal landscape, as to talk of amalgamating all nourishment into one ideal food, gathering all music into one ideal movement, or confounding all thought into one ideal idea.

There is, however, such a thing as composition of different orders of landscape, though there can be no generalization of them. Nature herself perpetually brings together elements of various expression. Her barren

rocks stoop through wooded promontories to the plain; and the wreaths of the vine show through their green shadows the wan light of unperishing snow.

The painter, therefore, has the choice of either working out the isolated character of some one distinct class of scene, or of bringing together a multitude of different elements, which may adorn each other by contrast.

I believe that the simple and uncombined landscape, if wrought out with due attention to the ideal beauty of the features it includes, will always be the most powerful in its appeal to the heart. Contrast increases the splendor of beauty, but it disturbs its influence; it adds to its attractiveness, but diminishes its power. On this subject I shall have much to say hereafter; at present I merely wish to suggest the possibility, that the single-minded painter, who is working out on broad and simple principles, a piece of unbroken, harmonious landscape character, may be reaching an end in art quite as high as the more ambitious student who is always "within five minutes' walk of everywhere," making the ends of the earth contribute to his pictorial guazzetto;* and the certainty, that unless the composition of the latter be regulated by severe judgment, and its members connected by natural links, it must become more contemptible in its motley, than an honest study of road-side weeds.

Let me, at the risk of tediously repeating what is universally known, refer to the common principles of historical composition, in order that I may show their application to that of landscape. The merest tyro in art knows that every figure which is unnecessary to his picture, is an encumbrance to it, and that every figure which

* "A green field is a sight which makes us pardon
The absence of that more sublime construction
Which mixes up vines, olive, precipices,
Glaciers, volcanoes, oranges, and ices."—*Don Juan.*

does not sympathize with the action, interrupts it. He that gathereth not with me, scattereth,—is, or ought to be, the ruling principle of his plan: and the power and grandeur of his result will be exactly proportioned to the unity of feeling manifested in its several parts, and to the propriety and simplicity of the relations in which they stand to each other.

All this is equally applicable to the materials of inanimate nature. Impressiveness is destroyed by a multitude of contradictory facts, and the accumulation, which is not harmonious, is discordant. He who endeavors to unite simplicity with magnificence, to guide from solitude to festivity, and to contrast melancholy with mirth, must end by the production of confused inanity. There is a peculiar spirit possessed by every kind of scene; and although a point of contrast may sometimes enhance and exhibit this particular feeling more intensely, it must be only a point, not an equalized opposition. Every introduction of new and different feeling weakens the force of what has already been impressed, and the mingling of all emotions must conclude in apathy, as the mingling of all colors in white.

Let us test by these simple rules one of the "ideal" landscape compositions of Claude, that known to the Italians as "Il Mulino."

The foreground is a piece of very lovely and perfect forest scenery, with a dance of peasants by a brookside; quite enough subject to form, in the hands of a master, an impressive and complete picture. On the other side of the brook, however, we have a piece of pastoral life, a man with some bulls and goats tumbling headforemost into the water, owing to some sudden paralytic affection of all their legs. Even this group is one too many; the shepherd had no business to drive his flock so near the dancers, and the dancers will certainly frighten the cattle. But when we look farther into the picture, our feelings

receive a sudden and violent shock, by the unexpected appearance, amidst things pastoral and musical, of the military: a number of Roman soldiers riding in on hobby-horses, with a leader on foot, apparently encouraging them to make an immediate and decisive charge on the musicians. Beyond the soldiers is a circular temple, in exceedingly bad repair, and close beside it, built against its very walls, a neat water-mill in full work. By the mill flows a large river, with a weir all across it. The weir has not been made for the mill, (for that receives its water from the hills by a trough carried over the temple,) but it is particularly ugly and monotonous in its line of fall, and the water below forms a dead-looking pond, on which some people are fishing in punts. The banks of this river resemble in contour the later geological formations around London, constituted chiefly of broken pots and oyster-shells. At an inconvenient distance from the water-side stands a city, composed of twenty-five round towers and a pyramid. Beyond the city is a handsome bridge; beyond the bridge, part of the Campagna, with fragments of aqueducts; beyond the Campagna, the chain of the Alps; on the left, the cascades of Tivoli.

This is, I believe, a fair example of what is commonly called an "ideal landscape," *i.e.*, a group of the artist's studies from nature, individually spoiled, selected with such opposition of character as may insure their neutralizing each other's effect, and united with sufficient unnaturalness and violence of association to insure their producing a general sensation of the impossible. Let us analyze the separate subjects a little in this ideal work of Claude's.

Perhaps there is no more impressive scene on earth than the solitary extent of the Campagna of Rome under evening light. Let the reader imagine himself for a moment withdrawn from the sounds and motion of the

living world, and sent forth alone into this wild and wasted plain. The earth yields and crumbles beneath his foot, tread he never so lightly, for its substance is white, hollow, and carious, like the dusty wreck of the bones of men.* The long knotted grass waves and tosses feebly in the evening wind, and the shadows of its motion shake feverishly along the banks of ruin that lift themselves to the sunlight. Hillocks of mouldering earth heave around him, as if the dead beneath were struggling in their sleep; scattered blocks of black stone, four-square, remnants of mighty edifices, not one left upon another, lie upon them to keep them down. A dull purple, poisonous haze stretches level along the desert, veiling its spectral wrecks of massy ruins, on whose rents the red light rests like dying fire on defiled altars. The blue ridge of the Alban mount lifts itself against a solemn space of green, clear, quiet sky. Watch-towers of dark clouds stand steadfastly along the promontories of the Apennines. From the plain to the mountains, the shattered aqueducts, pier beyond pier, melt into the darkness, like shadowy and countless troops of funeral mourners, passing from a nation's grave.

Let us, with Claude, make a few "ideal" alterations in this landscape. First, we will reduce the multitudinous precipices of the Apennines to four sugar-loaves. Secondly, we will remove the Alban mount, and put a large dust-heap in its stead. Next, we will knock down the greater part of the aqueducts, and leave only an arch or two, that their infinity of length may no longer be painful from its monotony. For the purple mist and declining sun we will substitute a bright blue sky, with round white clouds. Finally, we will get rid of the unpleasant ruins in the foreground; we will plant some handsome

* The vegetable soil of the Campagna is chiefly formed by decomposed lavas, and under it lies a bed of white pumice, exactly resembling remnants of bones.

trees therein, we will send for some fiddlers, and get up a dance, and a picnic party.

It will be found, throughout the picture, that the same species of improvement is made on the materials which Claude had ready to his hand. The descending slopes of the city of Rome, towards the pyramid of Caius Cestius, supply not only lines of the most exquisite variety and beauty, but matter for contemplation and reflection in every fragment of their buildings. This passage has been idealized by Claude into a set of similar round towers, respecting which no idea can be formed but that they are uninhabitable, and to which no interest can be attached, beyond the difficulty of conjecturing what they could have been built for. The ruins of the temple are rendered unimpressive by the juxtaposition of the water-mill, and inexplicable by the introduction of the Roman soldiers. The glide of the muddy streams of the melancholy Tiber and Anio through the Campagna is impressive in itself, but altogether ceases to be so, when we disturb their stillness of motion by a weir, adorn their neglected flow with a handsome bridge, and cover their solitary surface with punts, nets, and fishermen.

It cannot, I think, be expected, that landscapes like this should have any effect on the human heart, except to harden or to degrade it; to lead it from the love of what is simple, earnest, and pure, to what is as sophisticated and corrupt in arrangement as erring and imperfect in detail. So long as such works are held up for imitation, landscape painting must be a manufacture, its productions must be toys, and its patrons must be children.

My purpose then, in the present work, is to demonstrate the utter falseness both of the facts and principles; the imperfection of material, and error of arrangement, on which works such as these are based; and to insist on the necessity, as well as the dignity, of an earnest,

faithful, loving, study of nature as she is, rejecting with abhorrence all that man has done to alter and modify her. And the praise which, in this first portion of the work, is given to many English artists, would be justifiable on this ground only, that although frequently with little power and desultory effort, they have yet, in an honest and good heart, received the word of God from clouds, and leaves, and waves, and kept it,* and endeavored in humility to render to the world that purity of impression which can alone render the result of art an instrument of good, or its labor deserving of gratitude.

* The feelings of Constable with respect to his art might be almost a model for the young student, were it not that they err a little on the other side, and are perhaps in need of chastening and guiding from the works of his fellow-men. We should use pictures not as authorities, but as comments on nature, just as we use divines, not as authorities, but as comments on the Bible. Constable, in his dread of saint-worship, excommunicates himself from all benefit of the Church, and deprives himself of much instruction from the Scripture to which he holds, because he will not accept aid in the reading of it from the learning of other men. Sir George Beaumont, on the contrary, furnishes, in the anecdotes given of him in Constable's life, a melancholy instance of the degradation into which the human mind may fall, when it suffers human works to interfere between it and its Master. The recommending the color of an old Cremona fiddle for the prevailing tone of everything, and the vapid inquiry of the conventionalist, "Where do you put your brown tree?" show a prostration of intellect so laughable and lamentable that they are at once, on all, and to all, students of the gallery, a satire and a warning. Art so followed is the most servile indolence in which life can be wasted. There are then two dangerous extremes to be shunned—forgetfulness of the Scripture, and scorn of the divine—slavery on the one hand, free-thinking on the other. The mean is nearly as difficult to determine or keep in art as in religion, but the great danger is on the side of superstition. He who walks humbly with Nature will seldom be in danger of losing sight of Art. He will commonly find in all that is truly great of man's works, something of their original, for which he will regard them with gratitude, and sometimes follow them with respect; while he who takes Art for his authority may entirely lose sight of all that it interprets, and sink at once into the sin of an idolater, and the degradation of a slave.

If, however, I shall have frequent occasion to insist on the necessity of this heartfelt love of, and unqualified submission to, the teaching of nature, it will be no less incumbent upon me to reprobate the careless rendering of casual impression, and the mechanical copyism of unimportant subject, which are too frequently visible in our modern school.* Their lightness and desultoriness of intention, their meaningless multiplication of unstudied composition, and their want of definiteness and lofti-

* I should have insisted more on this fault (for it is a fatal one) in the following Essay, but the cause of it rests rather with the public than with the artist, and in the necessities of the public as much as in their will. Such pictures as artists themselves would wish to paint, could not be executed under very high prices; and it must always be easier, in the present state of society, to find ten purchasers of ten-guinea sketches, than one purchaser for a hundred-guinea picture. Still, I have been often both surprised and grieved to see that any effort on the part of our artists to rise above manufacture—any struggle to something like completed conception—was left by the public to be its own reward. In the water-color exhibition of last year there was a noble work of David Cox's, ideal in the right sense—a forest hollow with a few sheep crushing down through its deep fern, and a solemn opening of evening sky above its dark masses of distance. It was worth all his little bits on the walls put together. Yet the public picked up all the little bits—blots and splashes, ducks, chickweed, ears of corn—all that was clever and petite; and the real picture—the full development of the artist's mind—was left on his hands. How can I, or anyone else, with a conscience, advise him after this to aim at anything more than may be struck out by the cleverness of a quarter of an hour. Cattermole, I believe, is earthed and shackled in the same manner. He began his career with finished and studied pictures, which, I believe, never paid him—he now prostitutes his fine talent to the superficialness of public taste, and blots his way to emolument and oblivion. There is commonly, however, fault on both sides; in the artist for exhibiting his dexterity by mountebank tricks of the brush, until chaste finish, requiring ten times the knowledge and labor, appears insipid to the diseased taste which he has himself formed in his patrons, as the roaring and ranting of a common actor will oftentimes render apparently vapid the finished touches of perfect nature; and in the public, for taking less real pains to become acquainted with, and discriminate, the various powers of a great artist, than they would to estimate the excellence of a cook or develop the dexterity of a dancer.

ness of aim, bring discredit on their whole system of study, and encourage in the critic the unhappy prejudice that the field and the hill-side are less fit places of study than the gallery and the garret. Not every casual idea caught from the flight of a shower or the fall of a sunbeam, not every glowing fragment of harvest light, nor every flickering dream of copsewood coolness, is to be given to the world as it came, unconsidered, incomplete, and forgotten by the artist as soon as it has left his easel. That only should be considered a picture, in which the spirit, (not the materials, observe,) but the animating emotion of many such studies is concentrated, and exhibited by the aid of long-studied, painfully-chosen forms; idealized in the right sense of the word, not by audacious liberty of that faculty of degrading God's works which man calls his "imagination," but by perfect assertion of entire knowledge of every part and character and function of the object, and in which the details are completed to the last line compatible with the dignity and simplicity of the whole, wrought out with that noblest industry which concentrates profusion into point, and transforms accumulation into structure; neither must this labor be bestowed on every subject which appears to afford a capability of good, but on chosen subjects in which nature has prepared to the artist's hand the purest sources of the impression he would convey. These may be humble in their order, but they must be perfect of their kind. There is a perfection of the hedgerow and cottage, as well as of the forest and the palace, and more ideality in a great artist's selection and treatment of roadside weeds and brook-worn pebbles, than in all the struggling caricature of the meaner mind which heaps its foreground with colossal columns, and heaves impossible mountains into the encumbered sky. Finally, these chosen subjects must not be in any way repetitions of one another, but each founded on a

new idea, and developing a totally distinct train of thought; so that the work of the artist's life should form a consistent series of essays, rising through the scale of creation from the humblest scenery to the most exalted; each picture being a necessary link in the chain, based on what preceded, introducing to what is to follow, and all, in their lovely system, exhibiting and drawing closer the bonds of nature to the human heart.

Since, then, I shall have to reprobate the absence of study in the moderns nearly as much as its false direction in the ancients, my task will naturally divide itself into three portions. In the first, I shall endeavor to investigate and arrange the facts of nature with scientific accuracy; showing as I proceed, by what total neglect of the very first base and groundwork of their art the idealities of some among the old masters are produced. This foundation once securely laid, I shall proceed, in the second portion of the work, to analyze and demonstrate the nature of the emotions of the Beautiful and Sublime; to examine the particular characters of every kind of scenery, and to bring to light, as far as may be in my power, that faultless, ceaseless, inconceivable, inexhaustible loveliness, which God has stamped upon all things, if man will only receive them as He gives them. Finally, I shall endeavor to trace the operation of all this on the hearts and minds of men; to exhibit the moral function and end of art, to prove the share which it ought to have in the thoughts, and influence on the lives of all of us; to attach to the artist the responsibility of a preacher, and to kindle in the general mind that regard which such an office must demand.

It must be evident that the first portion of this task, which is all that I have yet been enabled to offer to the reader, cannot but be the least interesting and the most laborious, especially because it is necessary that it should be executed without reference to any principles

of beauty or influences of emotion. It is the hard, straightforward classification of material things, not the study of thought or passion; and therefore let me not be accused of the feelings which I choose to repress. The consideration of the high qualities of art must not be interrupted by the work of the hammer and the cudiometer.

Again, I would request that the frequent passages of reference to the great masters of the Italian school may not be looked upon as mere modes of conventional expression. I think there is enough in the following pages to prove that I am not likely to be carried away by the celebrity of a name; and therefore that the devoted love which I profess for the works of the great historical and sacred painters is sincere and well-grounded. And indeed every principle of art which I may advocate, I shall be able to illustrate by reference to the works of men universally allowed to be the masters of masters; and the public, so long as my teaching leads them to higher understanding and love of the works of Buonaroti, Leonardo, Raffaelle, Titian, and Cagliari, may surely concede to me without fear, the right of striking such blows as I may deem necessary to the establishment of my principles, at Gasper Poussin, or Vandevelde.

Indeed, I believe there is nearly as much occasion, at the present day, for advocacy of Michael Angelo against the pettiness of the moderns, as there is for support of Turner against the conventionalities of the ancients. For, though the names of the fathers of sacred art are on all our lips, our faith in them is much like that of the great world in its religion—nominal, but dead. In vain our lecturers sound the name of Raffaelle in the ears of their pupils, while their own works are visibly at variance with every principle deducible from his. In vain is the young student compelled to produce a certain number of school copies of Michael Angelo, when his

bread must depend on the number of gewgaws he can crowd into his canvas. And I could with as much zeal exert myself against the modern system of English historical art, as I have in favor of our school of landscape, but that it is an ungrateful and painful task to attack the works of living painters, struggling with adverse circumstances of every kind, and especially with the false taste of a nation which regards matters of art either with the ticklishness of an infant, or the stolidity of a Megatherium.

I have been accused, in the execution of this first portion of my work, of irreverent and scurrile expression towards the works which I have depreciated. Possibly I may have been in some degree infected by reading those criticisms of our periodicals, which consist of nothing else; but I believe in general that my words will be found to have sufficient truth in them to excuse their familiarity; and that no other weapons could have been used to pierce the superstitious prejudice with which the works of certain painters are shielded from the attacks of reason. My answer is that given long ago to a similar complaint, uttered under the same circumstances by the foiled sophist:—("Ως δ' ἔστιν ὃ ἄνθρωπος; ὡς ἀπαίδευτός τις, ος ουιω φαῦλα ὀνόματα ονομάζειν τολμᾷ ἐν σεμνῷ πράγματι.) Τοιοῦτός τις, ὦ Ιππία, ὀυδὲν ἄλλο φροντίζων ἢ τὸ αληθές."

It is with more surprise that I have heard myself accused of thoughtless severity with respect to the works of contemporary painters, for I fully believe that whenever I attack them, I give myself far more pain than I can possibly inflict; and, in many instances, I have withheld reprobation which I considered necessary to the full understanding of my work, in the fear of grieving or injuring men of whose feelings and circumstances I was ignorant. Indeed, the apparently false and exaggerated bias of the whole book in favor of modern art, is in great degree dependent on my withholding the animad-

versions which would have given it balance, and keeping silence where I cannot praise. But I had rather be a year or two longer in effecting my purposes, than reach them by trampling on men's hearts and hearths; and I have permitted myself to express unfavorable opinions only where the popularity and favor of the artist are so great as to render the opinion of an individual a matter of indifference to him.

And now—but one word more. For many a year we have heard nothing with respect to the works of Turner but accusations of their want of *truth*. To every observation on their power, sublimity, or beauty, there has been but one reply: They are not like nature. I therefore took my opponents on their own ground, and demonstrated, by thorough investigation of actual facts, that Turner *is* like nature, and paints more of nature than any man who ever lived. I expected this proposition (the foundation of all my future efforts) would have been disputed with desperate struggles, and that I should have had to fight my way to my position inch by inch. Not at all. My opponents yield me the field at once. One (the writer for the Athenæum) has no other resource than the assertion, that "he disapproves the natural style in painting. If people want to see *nature*, let them go and look at herself. Why should they see her at second-hand on a piece of canvas?" The other, (Blackwood,) still more utterly discomfited, is reduced to a still more remarkable line of defence. "It is not," he says, "what things in all respects really are, but how they are convertible by the mind into what they are *not*, that we have to consider." (October, 1843, p. 485.) I leave therefore the reader to choose whether, with Blackwood and his fellows, he will proceed to consider how things are convertible by the mind into what they are *not*, or whether, with me, he will undergo the harder, but perhaps on the whole more useful, labor of ascertaining—What they are.

PREFACE TO THE THIRD EDITION.

It is with much regret, and partly against my own judgment, that I republish the following chapters in their present form. The particular circumstances (stated in the first preface) under which they were originally written, have rendered them so unfit for the position they now hold as introductory to a serious examination of the general functions of art, that I should have wished first to complete the succeeding portions of the essay, and then to write another introduction of more fitting character. But as it may be long before I am able to do this, and as I believe what I have already written may still be of some limited and partial service, I have suffered it to reappear, trusting to the kindness of the reader to look to its intention rather than its temper, and forgive its inconsideration in its earnestness.

Thinking it of too little substance to bear mending, wherever I have found a passage which I thought required modification or explanation, I have cut it out; what I have left, however imperfect, cannot I think be dangerously misunderstood: something I have added, not under the idea of rendering the work in any wise systematic or complete, but to supply gross omissions, answer inevitable objections, and give some substance to passages of mere declamation.

Whatever inadequacy or error there may be, throughout, in materials or modes of demonstration, I have no doubt of the truth and necessity of the main result; and though the reader may, perhaps, find me frequently hereafter showing other and better grounds for what is here

affirmed, yet the point and bearing of the book, its determined depreciation of Claude, Salvator, Gaspar, and Canaletto, and its equally determined support of Turner as the greatest of all landscape painters, and of Turner's recent works as his finest, are good and right; and if the prevalence throughout of attack and eulogium be found irksome or offensive, let it be remembered that my object thus far has not been either the establishment or the teaching of any principles of art, but the vindication, most necessary to the prosperity of our present schools, of the uncomprehended rank of their greatest artist, and the diminution, equally necessary as I think to the prosperity of our schools, of the unadvised admiration of the landscape of the seventeenth century. For I believe it to be almost impossible to state in terms sufficiently serious and severe the depth and extent of the evil which has resulted (and that not in art alone, but in all other matters with which the contemplative faculties are concerned) from the works of those elder men. On the continent all landscape art has been utterly annihilated by them, and with it all sense of the power of nature. We in England have only done better because our artists have had strength of mind enough to form a school withdrawn from their influence.

These points are somewhat farther developed in the general sketch of ancient and modern landscape, which I have added to the first section of the second part. Some important additions have also been made to the chapters on the painting of sea. Throughout the rest of the text, though something is withdrawn, little is changed; and the reader may rest assured that if I were now to bestow on this feeble essay the careful revision which it much needs, but little deserves, it would not be to alter its tendencies, or modify its conclusions, but to prevent indignation from appearing virulence on the one side, and enthusiasm partisanship on the other.

PREFACE TO NEW EDITION (1873).

I HAVE been lately so often asked by friends on whose judgment I can rely, to permit the publication of another edition of "Modern Painters" in its original form, that I have at last yielded, though with some violence to my own feelings; for many parts of the first and second volumes are written in a narrow enthusiasm, and the substance of their metaphysical and religious speculation is only justifiable on the ground of its absolute honesty. Of the third, fourth, and fifth volumes I indeed mean eventually to rearrange what I think of permanent interest, for the complete edition of my works, but with fewer and less elaborate illustrations: nor have I any serious grounds for refusing to allow the book once more to appear in the irregular form which it took as it was written, since of the art-teaching and landscape description it contains I have little to retrench, and nothing to retract.

This final edition must, however, be limited to a thousand copies, for some of the more delicate plates are already worn, that of the Mill Stream in the fifth volume, and of the Loire Side very injuriously; while that of the Shores of Wharfe had to be retouched by an engraver after the removal of the mezzotint for reprinting. But Mr. Armytage's, Mr. Cousen's, and Mr. Cuff's magnificent plates are still in good state, and my own etchings, though injured, are still good enough to answer their purpose.

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ST. MICHAEL'S COLLEGE
LIBRARY

MODERN PAINTERS.

PART I.

OF GENERAL PRINCIPLES.

SECTION I.

OF THE NATURE OF THE IDEAS CONVEYABLE BY ART.

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTORY.

If it be true, and it can scarcely be disputed, that nothing has been for centuries consecrated by public admiration, without possessing in a high degree some kind of sterling excellence, it is not because the average intellect and feeling of the majority of the public are competent in any way to distinguish what is really excellent, but because all erroneous opinion is inconsistent, and all ungrounded opinion transitory; so that while the fancies and feelings which deny deserved honor and award what is undue have neither root nor strength sufficient to maintain consistent testimony for a length of time, the opinions formed on right grounds by those few who are in reality competent judges, being necessarily stable, communicate themselves gradually from mind to

§1. Public opinion no criterion of excellence, except after long periods of time.

mind, descending lower as they extend wider, until they leaven the whole lump, and rule by absolute authority, even where the grounds and reasons for them cannot be understood. On this gradual victory of what is consistent over what is vacillating, depends the reputation of all that is highest in art and literature. For it is an insult to what is really great in either, to suppose that it in any way addresses itself to mean or uncultivated faculties. It is a matter of the simplest demonstration, that no man can be really appreciated but by his equal or superior. His inferior may over-estimate him in enthusiasm; or, as is more commonly the case, degrade him, in ignorance; but he cannot form a grounded and just estimate. Without proving this, however—which it would take more space to do than I can spare—it is sufficiently evident that there is no process of amalgamation by which opinions, wrong individually, can become right merely by their multitude.*

If I stand by a picture in the Academy, and hear twenty persons in succession admiring some paltry piece of mechanism or imitation in the lining of a cloak, or the satin of a slipper, it is absurd to tell me that they reprobate collectively what they admire individually: or, if they pass with apathy by a piece of the most noble conception or most perfect truth, because it has in it no tricks of the brush nor grimace of expression, it is absurd to tell me that they collectively respect what they separately scorn, or that the feelings and knowledge of such judges, by any length of time or comparison of ideas, could come to any right conclusion with respect to what is really high in art. The question is not de-

* The opinion of a majority is right only when it is more probable with each individual that he should be right than that he should be wrong, as in the case of a jury. Where it is more probable, with respect to each individual, that he should be wrong than right, the opinion of the minority is the true one. Thus it is in art.

cided by them, but for them;—decided at first by few: by fewer in proportion as the merits of the work are of a higher order. From these few the decision is communicated to the number next below them in rank of mind, and by these again to a wider and lower circle; each rank being so far cognizant of the superiority of that above it, as to receive its decision with respect; until, in process of time, the right and consistent opinion is communicated to all, and held by all as a matter of faith, the more positively in proportion as the grounds of it are less perceived.*

* There are, however, a thousand modifying circumstances which render this process sometimes unnecessary,—sometimes rapid and certain—sometimes impossible. It is unnecessary in rhetoric and the drama, because the multitude is the only proper judge of those arts whose end is to move the multitude (though more is necessary to a fine play than is essentially dramatic, and it is only of the dramatic part that the multitude are cognizant). It is unnecessary, when, united with the higher qualities of a work, there are appeals to universal passion, to all the faculties and feelings which are general in man as an animal. The popularity is then as sudden as it is well grounded, —it is hearty and honest in every mind, but it is based in every mind on a different species of excellence. Such will often be the case with the noblest works of literature. Take Don Quixote for example. The lowest mind would find in it perpetual and brutal amusement in the misfortunes of the knight, and perpetual pleasure in sympathy with the squire. A mind of average feeling would perceive the satirical meaning and force of the book, would appreciate its wit, its elegance, and its truth. But only elevated and peculiar minds discover, in addition to all this, the full moral beauty of the love and truth which are the constant associates of all that is even most weak and erring in the character of its hero, and pass over the rude adventure and scurrile jest in haste—perhaps in pain, to penetrate beneath the rusty corselet, and catch from the wandering glance the evidence and expression of fortitude, self-devotion, and universal love. So, again with the works of Scott and Byron; popularity was as instant as it was deserved, because there is in them an appeal to those passions which are universal in all men, as well as an expression of such thoughts as can be received only by the few. But they are admired by the majority of their advocates for the weakest parts of their works, as a popular preacher by the majority of his congregation for the worst part of his sermon.

But when this process has taken place, and the work has become sanctified by time in the minds of men, it is impossible that any new work of equal merit can be impartially compared with it, except by minds not only educated and generally capable of appreciating merit, but strong enough to shake off the weight of prejudice and association, which invariably incline them to the older favorite. It is much easier, says Barry, to repeat the character

§ 2. And therefore obstinate when once formed.

The process is rapid and certain, when, though there may be little to catch the multitude at once, there is much which they can enjoy when their attention is authoritatively directed to it. So rests the reputation of Shakspeare. No ordinary mind can comprehend wherein his undisputed superiority consists, but there is yet quite as much to amuse, thrill, or excite,—quite as much of what is, in the strict sense of the word, dramatic in his works as in any one else's. They were received, therefore, when first written, with average approval, as works of common merit; but when the high decision was made, and the circle spread, the public took up the hue and cry conscientiously enough. Let them have daggers, ghosts, clowns, and kings, and with such real and definite sources of enjoyment, they will take the additional trouble to learn half a dozen quotations, without understanding them, and admit the superiority of Shakspeare without further demur. Nothing, perhaps, can more completely demonstrate the total ignorance of the public of all that is great or valuable in Shakspeare than their universal admiration of Maclise's Hamlet.

The process is impossible when there is in the work nothing to attract and something to disgust the vulgar mind. Neither their intrinsic excellence, nor the authority of those who can judge of it, will ever make the poems of Wordsworth or George Herbert popular, in the sense in which Scott and Byron are popular, because it is to the vulgar a labor instead of a pleasure to read them; and there are parts in them which to such judges cannot but be vapid or ridiculous. Most works of the highest art,—those of Raffaelle, M. Angelo, or Da Vinci, —stand as Shakspeare does,—that which is commonplace and feeble in their excellence being taken for its essence by the uneducated, imagination assisting the impression, (for we readily fancy that we feel, when feeling is a matter of pride or conscience,) and affectation and pretension increasing the noise of the rapture, if not its degree. Giotto, Orgagna, Angelico, Perugino, stand, like George Herbert, only with the few. Wilkie becomes popular, like Scott, because he touches passions which all feel, and expresses truths which all can recognize.

recorded of Phidias, than to investigate the merits of Agasias. And when, as peculiarly in the case of painting, much knowledge of what is technical and practical is necessary to a right judgment, so that those alone are competent to pronounce a true verdict who are themselves the persons to be judged, and who therefore can give no opinion, centuries may elapse before fair comparison can be made between two artists of different ages; while the patriarchal excellence exercises during the interval a tyrannical—perhaps, even a blighting, influence over the minds, both of the public and of those to whom, properly understood, it should serve for a guide and example. In no city of Europe where art is a subject of attention, are its prospects so hopeless, or its pursuits so resultless, as in Rome; because there, among all students, the authority of their predecessors in art is supreme and without appeal, and the mindless copyist studies Raffaelle, but not what Raffaelle studied. It thus becomes the duty of every one capable of demonstrating any definite points of superiority in modern art, and who is in a position in which his doing so will not be ungraceful, to encounter without hesitation whatever opprobrium may fall upon him from the necessary prejudice even of the most candid minds, and from the far more virulent opposition of those who have no hope of maintaining their own reputation for discernment but in the support of that kind of consecrated merit which may be applauded without an inconvenient necessity for reasons. It is my purpose, therefore, believing that there are certain points of superiority in modern artists, and especially in one or two of their number, which have not yet been fully understood, except by those who are scarcely in a position admitting the declaration of their conviction, to institute a close comparison between the great works of ancient and modern landscape art, to

§ 3. The author's reasons for opposing it in particular instances.

raise, as far as possible, the deceptive veil of imaginary light through which we are accustomed to gaze upon the patriarchal work, and to show the real relations, whether favorable or otherwise, subsisting between it and our own. I am fully aware that this is not to be done lightly or rashly; that it is the part of every one proposing to undertake such a task strictly to examine, with prolonged doubt and severe trial, every opinion in any way contrary to the sacred verdict of time, and to advance nothing which does not, at least in his own conviction, rest on surer ground than mere feeling or taste. I have accordingly advanced nothing in the following pages but with accompanying demonstration, which may indeed be true or false—complete or conditional, but which can only be met on its own grounds, and can in no way be borne down or affected by mere authority of great names. Yet even thus I should scarcely have ventured to speak so decidedly as I have, but for my full conviction that we ought not to class the historical painters of the fifteenth, and landscape painters of the seventeenth, centuries, together, under the general title of "old masters," as if they possessed anything like corresponding rank in their respective walks of art. I feel assured that the principles on which they worked are totally opposed, and that the landscape painters have been honored only because they exhibited in mechanical and technical qualities some semblance of the manner of the nobler historical painters, whose principles of conception and composition they entirely reversed. The course of study which has led me reverently to the feet of Michael Angelo and Da Vinci, has alienated me gradually from Claude and Gaspar—I cannot at the same time do homage to power and pettiness—to the truth of consummate science, and the mannerism of undisciplined imagination. And let it be understood that whenever

§ 4. But only on points capable of demonstration.

hereafter I speak depreciatingly of the old masters as a body, I refer to none of the historical painters, for whom I entertain a veneration, which though I hope reasonable in its grounds, is almost superstitious in degree. Neither, unless he be particularly mentioned, do I intend to include Nicholas Poussin, whose landscapes have a separate and elevated character, which renders it necessary to consider them apart from all others. Speaking generally of the older masters, I refer only to Claude, Gaspar, Poussin, Salvator Rosa, Cuyp, Berghem, Both, Ruysdael, Hobbima, Teniers, (in his landscapes,) P. Potter, Canaletti, and the various Van somethings, and Back somethings, more especially and malignantly those who have libelled the sea.

It will of course be necessary for me, in the commencement of the work to state briefly those principles on which I conceive all right judgment of art must be founded. These introductory chapters I should wish to be read carefully, because all criticism must be useless when the terms or grounds of it are in any degree ambiguous; and the ordinary language of connoisseurs and critics, granting that they understand it themselves, is usually mere jargon to others, from their custom of using technical terms, by which everything is meant, and nothing is expressed.

§ 5. The author's partiality to modern works excusable.

And if, in the application of these principles, in spite of my endeavor to render it impartial, the feeling and fondness which I have for some works of modern art escape me sometimes where it should not, let it be pardoned as little more than a fair counterbalance to that peculiar veneration with which the work of the older master, associated as it has ever been in our ears with the expression of whatever is great or perfect, must be usually regarded by the reader. I do not say that this veneration is wrong, nor that we should be less attentive to the re-

peated words of time: but let us not forget, that if honor be for the dead, gratitude can only be for the living. He who has once stood beside the grave, to look back upon the companionship which has been forever closed, feeling how impotent *there* are the wild love, or the keen sorrow, to give one instant's pleasure to the pulseless heart, or atone in the lowest measure to the departed spirit for the hour of unkindness, will scarcely for the future incur that debt to the heart, which can only be discharged to the dust. But the lesson which men receive as individuals, they do not learn as nations. Again and again they have seen their noblest descend into the grave, and have thought it enough to garland the tombstone when they had not crowned the brow, and to pay the honor to the ashes which they had denied to the spirit. Let it not displease them that they are bidden, amidst the tumult and the dazzle of their busy life, to listen for the few voices, and watch for the few lamps, which God has toned and lighted to charm and to guide them, that they may not learn their sweetness by their silence, nor their light by their decay.

CHAPTER II.

DEFINITION OF GREATNESS IN ART.

In the 15th Lecture of Sir Joshua Reynolds, incidental notice is taken of the distinction between those excellences in the painter which belong to him *as such*, and those which belong to him in common with all men of intellect, the general and exalted powers of which art is the evidence and expression, not the subject. But the distinction is not there dwelt upon as it should be, for it is owing to the slight attention ordinarily paid to it, that criticism is open to every form of coxcombry, and liable to every phase of error. It is a distinction on which depend all sound judgment of the rank of the artist, and all just appreciation of the dignity of art.

§ 1. Distinction between the painter's intellectual power and technical knowledge.

Painting, or art generally, as such, with all its technicalities, difficulties, and particular ends, is nothing but a noble and expressive language, invaluable as the vehicle of thought, but by itself nothing. He who has learned what is commonly considered the whole art of painting, that is, the art of representing any natural object faithfully, has as yet only learned the language by which his thoughts are to be expressed. He has done just as much toward being that which we ought to respect as a great painter, as a man who has learned how to express himself grammatically and melodiously has towards being a great poet. The language is, indeed, more difficult of acquirement in the one case than in the other, and pos-

§ 2. Painting, as such, is nothing more than language.

sesses more power of delighting the sense, while it speaks to the intellect, but it is, nevertheless, nothing more than language, and all those excellences which are peculiar to the painter as such, are merely what rhythm, melody, precision and force are in the words of the orator and the poet, necessary to their greatness, but not the test of their greatness. It is not by the mode of representing and saying, but by what is represented and said, that the respective greatness either of the painter or the writer is to be finally determined.

§ 3. "Painter," a term corresponding to "versifier."

Speaking with strict propriety, therefore, we should call a man a great painter only as he excelled in precision and force in the language of lines, and a great versifier, as he excelled in precision or force in the language of words. A great poet would then be a term strictly, and in precisely the same sense applicable to both, if warranted by the character of the images or thoughts which each in their respective languages convey.

§ 4. Example in a painting of E. Landseer's.

Take, for instance, one of the most perfect poems or pictures (I use the words as synonymous) which modern times have seen:—the "Old Shepherd's Chief-mourner." Here the exquisite execution of the glossy and crisp hair of the dog, the bright, sharp touching of the green bough beside it, the clear painting of the wood of the coffin and the folds of the blanket, are language—language clear and expressive in the highest degree. But the close pressure of the dog's breast against the wood, the convulsive clinging of the paws, which has dragged the blanket off the trestle, the total powerlessness of the head laid, close and motionless, upon its folds, the fixed and tearful fall of the eye in its utter hopelessness, the rigidity of repose which marks that there has been no motion nor change in the trance of agony since the last blow was struck on the coffin-lid, the quietness and

gloom of the chamber, the spectacles marking the place where the Bible was last closed, indicating how lonely has been the life—how unwatched the departure of him who is now laid solitary in his sleep;—these are all thoughts—thoughts by which the picture is separated at once from hundreds of equal merit, as far as mere painting goes, by which it ranks as a work of high art, and stamps its author, not as the neat imitator of the texture of a skin, or the fold of a drapery, but as the Man of Mind.

§ 5. Difficulty of fixing an exact limit between language and thought.

It is not, however, always easy, either in painting or literature, to determine where the influence of language stops, and where that of thought begins. Many thoughts are so dependent upon the language in which they are clothed, that they would lose half their beauty if otherwise expressed. But the highest thoughts are those which are least dependent on language, and the dignity of any composition and praise to which it is entitled, are in exact proportion to its independency of language or expression. A composition is indeed usually most perfect, when to such intrinsic dignity is added all that expression can do to attract and adorn; but in every case of supreme excellence this all becomes as nothing. We are more gratified by the simplest lines or words which can suggest the idea in its own naked beauty, than by the robe or the gem which conceal while they decorate; we are better pleased to feel by their absence how little they could bestow, than by their presence how much they can destroy.

§ 6. Distinction between decorative and expressive language.

There is therefore a distinction to be made between what is ornamental in language and what is expressive. That part of it which is necessary to the embodying and conveying the thought is worthy of respect and attention as necessary to excellence, though not the test of it. But

that part of it which is decorative has little more to do with the intrinsic excellence of the picture than the frame or the varnishing of it. And this caution in distinguishing between the ornamental and the expressive is peculiarly necessary in painting; for in the language of words it is nearly impossible for that which is not expressive to be beautiful, except by mere rhythm or melody, any sacrifice to which is immediately stigmatized as error. But the beauty of mere language in painting is not only very attractive and entertaining to the spectator, but requires for its attainment no small exertion of mind and devotion of time by the artist. Hence, in art, men have frequently fancied that they were becoming rhetoricians and poets when they were only learning to speak melodiously, and the judge has over and over again advanced to the honor of authors those who were never more than ornamental writing-masters.

§ 7. Instance in the Dutch and early Italian schools.

Most pictures of the Dutch school, for instance, excepting always those of Rubens, Vandyke, and Rembrandt, are ostentatious exhibitions of the artist's power of speech, the clear and vigorous elocution of useless and senseless words: while the early efforts of Cimabue and Giotto are the burning messages of prophecy, delivered by the stammering lips of infants. It is not by ranking the former as more than mechanics, or the latter as less than artists, that the taste of the multitude, always awake to the lowest pleasures which art can bestow, and blunt to the highest, is to be formed or elevated. It must be the part of the judicious critic carefully to distinguish what is language, and what is thought, and to rank and praise pictures chiefly for the latter, considering the former as a totally inferior excellence, and one which cannot be compared with nor weighed against thought in any way nor in any degree whatsoever. The picture which has

the nobler and more numerous ideas, however awkwardly expressed, is a greater and a better picture than that which has the less noble and less numerous ideas, however beautifully expressed. No weight, nor mass, nor beauty of execution can outweigh one grain or fragment of thought. Three penstrokes of Raffaelle are a greater and a better picture than the most finished work that ever Carlo Dolci polished into inanity. A finished work of a great artist is only better than its sketch, if the sources of pleasure belonging to color and realization—valuable in themselves,—are so employed as to increase the impressiveness of the thought. But if one atom of thought has vanished, all color, all finish, all execution, all ornament, are too dearly bought. Nothing but thought can pay for thought, and the instant that the increasing refinement or finish of the picture begins to be paid for by the loss of the faintest shadow of an idea, that instant all refinement or finish is an excrescence and a deformity.

§ 8. Yet there are certain ideas belonging to language itself.

Yet although in all our speculations on art, language is thus to be distinguished from, and held subordinate to, that which it conveys, we must still remember that there are certain ideas inherent in language itself, and that strictly speaking, every pleasure connected with art has in it some reference to the intellect. The mere sensual pleasure of the eye, received from the most brilliant piece of coloring, is as nothing to that which it receives from a crystal prism, except as it depends on our perception of a certain meaning and intended arrangement of color, which has been the subject of intellect. Nay, the term idea, according to Locke's definition of it, will extend even to the sensual impressions themselves as far as they are "things which the mind occupies itself about in thinking," that is, not as they are felt by the eye only, but as they are received by the mind through the eye. So that, if I say that

§ 9. The definition.

the greatest picture is that which conveys to the mind of the spectator the greatest number of the greatest ideas, I have a definition which will include as subjects of comparison every pleasure which art is capable of conveying. If I were to say, on the contrary, that the best picture was that which most closely imitated nature, I should assume that art could only please by imitating nature, and I should cast out of the pale of criticism those parts of works of art which are not imitative, that is to say, intrinsic beauties of color and form, and those works of art wholly, which, like the arabesques of Raffaelle in the Loggias, are not imitative at all. Now I want a definition of art wide enough to include all its varieties of aim; I do not say therefore that the art is greatest which gives most pleasure, because perhaps there is some art whose end is to teach, and not to please. I do not say that the art is greatest which teaches us most, because perhaps there is some art whose end is to please, and not to teach. I do not say that the art is greatest which imitates best, because perhaps there is some art whose end is to create, and not to imitate. But I say that the art is greatest, which conveys to the mind of the spectator, by any means whatsoever, the greatest number of the greatest ideas, and I call an idea great in proportion as it is received by a higher faculty of the mind, and as it more fully occupies, and in occupying, exercises and exalts, the faculty by which it is received.

If this then be the definition of great art, that of a great artist naturally follows. He is the greatest artist who has embodied, in the sum of his works, the greatest number of the greatest ideas.

CHAPTER III.

OF IDEAS OF POWER.

THE definition of art which I have just given, requires me to determine what kinds of ideas can be received from works of art, and which of these are the greatest, before proceeding to any practical application of the test.

§ 1. What classes of ideas are conveyable by art.

I think that all the sources of pleasure, or any other good, to be derived from works of art, may be referred to five distinct heads.

I. Ideas of Power.—The perception or conception of the mental or bodily powers by which the work has been produced.

II. Ideas of Imitation.—The perception that the thing produced resembles something else.

III. Ideas of Truth.—The perception of faithfulness in a statement of facts by the thing produced.

IV. Ideas of Beauty.—The perception of beauty, either in the thing produced, or in what it suggests or resembles.

V. Ideas of Relation.—The perception of intellectual relations, in the thing produced, or in what it suggests or resembles.

I shall briefly distinguish the nature and effects of each of these classes of ideas.

I. Ideas of Power.—These are the simple perception of the mental or bodily powers exerted in the production of any work of art. According to the dignity and degree of the power perceived is the dignity of the idea; but the whole class

§ 2. Ideas of power vary much in relative dignity.

of ideas is received by the intellect, and they excite the best of the moral feelings, veneration, and the desire of exertion. As a species, therefore, they are one of the noblest connected with art; but the differences in degree of dignity among themselves are infinite, being correspondent with every order of power,—from that of the fingers to that of the most exalted intellect. Thus, when we see an Indian's paddle carved from the handle to the blade, we have a conception of prolonged manual labor, and are gratified in proportion to the supposed expenditure of time and exertion. These are, indeed, powers of a low order, yet the pleasure arising from the conception of them enters very largely indeed into our admiration of all elaborate ornament, architectural decoration, etc. The delight with which we look on the fretted front of Rouen Cathedral depends in no small degree on the simple perception of time employed and labor expended in its production. But it is a right, that is, an ennobling pleasure even in this its lowest phase; and even the pleasure felt by those persons who praise a drawing for its "finish," or its "work," which is one precisely of the same kind, would be right, if it did not imply a want of perception of the higher powers which render work unnecessary. If to the evidence of labor be added that of strength or dexterity, the sensation of power is yet increased; if to strength and dexterity be added that of ingenuity and judgment, it is multiplied tenfold, and so on, through all the subjects of action of body or mind, we receive the more exalted pleasure from the more exalted power.

§ 3. But are received from whatever has been the subject of power. The meaning of the word "excellence."

So far the nature and effects of ideas of power cannot but be admitted by all. But the circumstance which I wish especially to insist upon, with respect to them, is one which may not, perhaps, be so readily allowed, namely, that they are independent of the nature or worthiness of the object from which they are received,

and that whatever has been the subject of a great power, whether there be intrinsic and apparent worthiness in itself or not, bears with it the evidence of having been so, and is capable of giving the ideas of power, and the consequent pleasures, in their full degree. For observe, that a thing is not properly said to have been the result of a great power, on which only some part of that power has been expended. A nut may be cracked by a steam engine, but it has not, in being so, been the subject of the power of the engine. And thus it is falsely said of great men, that they waste their lofty powers on unworthy objects: the object may be dangerous or useless, but, as far as the phrase has reference to difficulty of performance, it cannot be unworthy of the power which it brings into exertion, because nothing can become a subject of action to a greater power which can be accomplished by a less, any more than bodily strength can be exerted where there is nothing to resist it.

So then, men may let their great powers lie dormant, while they employ their mean and petty powers on mean and petty objects; but it is physically impossible to employ a great power, except on a great object. Consequently, wherever power of any kind or degree has been exerted, the marks and evidence of it are stamped upon its results: it is impossible that it should be lost or wasted, or without record, even in the "estimation of a hair:" and therefore, whatever has been the subject of a great power bears about with it the image of that which created it, and is what is commonly called "excellent." And this is the true meaning of the word excellent, as distinguished from the terms "beautiful," "useful," "good," etc.; and we shall always, in future, use the word excellent, as signifying that the thing to which it is applied required a great power for its production.*

* Of course the word "excellent" is primarily a mere synonym with "surpassing," and when applied to persons, has the general

§ 4. What is necessary to the distinguishing of excellence.

The faculty of perceiving what powers are required for the production of a thing, is the faculty of perceiving excellence. It is this faculty in which men, even of the most cultivated taste, must always be wanting, unless they have added practice to reflection; because none can estimate the power manifested in victory, unless they have personally measured the strength to be overcome. Though, therefore, it is possible, by the cultivation of sensibility and judgment, to become capable of distinguishing what is beautiful, it is totally impossible, without practice and knowledge, to distinguish or feel what is excellent. The beauty or the truth of Titian's flesh-tint may be appreciated by all; but it is only to the artist, whose multiplied hours of toil have not reached the slightest resemblance of one of its tones, that its *excellence* is manifest.

§ 5. The pleasure attendant on conquering difficulties is right.

Wherever, then, difficulty has been overcome, there is excellence: and therefore, in order to prove a work excellent, we have only to prove the difficulty of its production: whether it be useful or beautiful is another question; its excellence depends on its difficulty alone. Nor is it a false or diseased taste which looks for the overcoming of difficulties, and has pleasure in it, even without any view to resultant good. It has been made part of our moral nature that we should have a pleasure in encountering and con-

meaning given by Johnson—"the state of abounding in any good quality." But when applied to things it has always reference to the power by which they are produced. We talk of excellent music or poetry, because it is difficult to compose or write such, but never of excellent flowers, because all flowers being the result of the same power, must be equally excellent. We distinguish them only as beautiful or useful, and therefore, as there is no other one word to signify that quality of a thing produced by which it pleases us merely as the result of power, and as the term "excellent" is more frequently used in this sense than in any other, I choose to limit it at once to this sense, and I wish it, when I use it in future, to be so understood.

quering opposition, for the sake of the struggle, and the victory, not for the sake of any after result; and not only our own victory, but the perception of that of another, is in all cases the source of pure and ennobling pleasure. And if we often hear it said, and truly said, that an artist has erred by seeking rather to show his skill in overcoming technical difficulties, than to reach a great end, be it observed that he is only blamed because he has sought to conquer an inferior difficulty rather than a great one; for it is much easier to overcome technical difficulties than to reach a great end. Whenever the visible victory over difficulties is found painful or in false taste, it is owing to the preference of an inferior to a great difficulty, or to the false estimate of what is difficult and what is not. It is far more difficult to be simple than to be complicated; far more difficult to sacrifice skill and cease exertion in the proper place, than to expend both indiscriminately. We shall find, in the course of our investigation, that beauty and difficulty go together; and that they are only mean and paltry difficulties which it is wrong or contemptible to wrestle with. Be it remembered then—Power is never wasted. Whatever power has been employed, produces excellence in proportion to its own dignity and exertion; and the faculty of perceiving this exertion, and appreciating this dignity, is the faculty of perceiving excellence.

CHAPTER IV.

OF IDEAS OF IMITATION.

§ 1. False use of the term "imitation" by many writers of art.

FUSELI, in his lectures, and many other persons of equally just and accurate habits of thought, (among others, S. T. Coleridge,) make a distinction between imitation and copying, representing the first as the legitimate function of art—the latter as its corruption; but as such a distinction is by no means warranted, or explained by the common meaning of the words themselves, it is not easy to comprehend exactly in what sense they are used by those writers. And though, reasoning from the context, I can understand what ideas those words stand for in their minds, I cannot allow the terms to be properly used as symbols of those ideas, which (especially in the case of the word Imitation) are exceedingly complex, and totally different from what most people would understand by the term. And by men of less accurate thought, the word is used still more vaguely or falsely. For instance, Burke ("Treatise on the Sublime," part i. sect. 16) says, "When the object represented in poetry or painting is such as we could have no desire of seeing in the reality, then we may be sure that its power in poetry or painting is owing to the power of *imitation*." In which case the real pleasure may be in what we have been just speaking of, the dexterity of the artist's hand; or it may be in a beautiful or singular arrangement of colors, or a thoughtful chiaroscuro, or in the pure beauty of certain forms which art forces on our notice, though

we should not have observed them in the reality; and I conceive that none of these sources of pleasure are in any way expressed or intimated by the term "imitation."

But there is one source of pleasure in works of art totally different from all these, which I conceive to be properly and accurately expressed by the word "imitation:" one which, though constantly confused in reasoning, because it is always associated in fact, with other means of pleasure, is totally separated from them in its nature, and is the real basis of whatever complicated or various meaning may be afterward attached to the word in the minds of men.

I wish to point out this distinct source of pleasure clearly at once, and only to use the word "imitation" in reference to it.

§ 2. Real meaning of the term.

Whenever anything looks like what it is not, the resemblance being so great as *nearly* to deceive, we feel a kind of pleasurable surprise, an agreeable excitement of mind, exactly the same in its nature as that which we receive from juggling. Whenever we perceive this in something produced by art, that is to say, whenever the work is seen to resemble something which we know it is not, we receive what I call an idea of imitation. *Why* such ideas are pleasing, it would be out of our present purpose to inquire; we only know that there is no man who does not feel pleasure in his animal nature from gentle surprise, and that such surprise can be excited in no more distinct manner than by the evidence that a thing is not what it appears to be.*

§ 3. What is requisite to the sense of imitation.

Now two things are requisite to our complete and more pleasurable perception of this: first, that the resemblance be so perfect as to amount to a deception; secondly, that there

* συλλογισμός ἐστιν, ὅτι τοῦτο ἐκεῖνο.—Arist. Rhet. 1, 11, 23.

be some means of proving at the same moment that it *is* a deception. The most perfect ideas and pleasures of imitation are, therefore, when one sense is contradicted by another, both bearing as positive evidence on the subject as each is capable of alone; as when the eye says a thing is round, and the finger says it is flat; they are, therefore, never felt in so high a degree as in painting, where appearance of projection, roughness, hair, velvet, etc., are given with a smooth surface, or in wax-work, where the first evidence of the senses is perpetually contradicted by their experience; but the moment we come to marble, our definition checks us, for a marble figure does not look like what it is not: it looks like marble, and like the form of a man, but then it *is* marble, and it *is* the form of a man. It does not look like a man, which it is not, but like the form of a man, which it is. Form is form, *bona fide* and actual, whether in marble or in flesh—not an imitation or resemblance of form, but real form. The chalk outline of the bough of a tree on paper, is not an imitation; it looks like chalk and paper —not like wood, and that which it suggests to the mind is not properly said to be *like* the form of a bough, it *is* the form of a bough. Now, then, we see the limits of an idea of imitation; it extends only to the sensation of trickery and deception occasioned by a thing's intentionally seeming different from what it is; and the degree of the pleasure depends on the degree of difference and the perfection of the resemblance, not on the nature of the thing resembled. The simple pleasure in the imitation would be precisely of the same degree, (if the accuracy could be equal,) whether the subject of it were the hero or his horse. There are other collateral sources of pleasure, which are necessarily associated with this, but that part of the pleasure which depends on the imitation is the same in both.

Ideas of imitation, then, act by producing the simple

pleasure of surprise, and that not of surprise in its highest sense and function, but of the mean and paltry surprise which is felt in jugglery. These ideas and pleasures are the most contemptible which can be received from art; first, because it is necessary to their enjoyment that the mind should reject the impression and address of the thing represented, and fix itself only upon the reflection that it is not what it seems to be. All high or noble emotion or thought are thus rendered physically impossible, while the mind exults in what is very like a strictly sensual pleasure. We may consider tears as a result of agony or of art, whichever we please, but not of both at the same moment. If we are surprised by them as an attainment of the one, it is impossible we can be moved by them as a sign of the other.

§ 4. The pleasure resulting from imitation the most contemptible that can be derived from art.

Ideas of imitation are contemptible in the second place, because not only do they preclude the spectator from enjoying inherent beauty in the subject, but they can only be received from mean and paltry subjects, because it is impossible to imitate anything really great. We can "paint a cat or a fiddle, so that they look as if we could take them up;" but we cannot imitate the ocean, or the Alps. We can imitate fruit, but not a tree; flowers, but not a pasture; cut-glass, but not the rainbow. All pictures in which deceptive powers of imitation are displayed are therefore either of contemptible subjects, or have the imitation shown in contemptible parts of them, bits of dress, jewels, furniture, etc.

§ 5. Imitation is only of contemptible subjects.

Thirdly, these ideas are contemptible, because no ideas of power are associated with them; to the ignorant, imitation, indeed, seems difficult, and its success praiseworthy, but even they can by no possibility see more in the artist than they do in a juggler, who arrives at a strange end by

§ 6. Imitation is contemptible because it is easy.

means with which they are unacquainted. To the instructed, the juggler is by far the more respectable artist of the two, for they know sleight of hand to be an art of immensely more difficult acquirement, and to imply more ingenuity in the artist than a power of deceptive imitation in painting, which requires nothing more for its attainment than a true eye, a steady hand, and moderate industry—qualities which in no degree separate the imitative artist from a watch-maker, pin-maker, or any other neat-handed artificer. These remarks do not apply to the art of the Diorama, or the stage, where the pleasure is not dependent on the imitation, but is the same which we should receive from nature herself, only far inferior in degree. It is a noble pleasure; but we shall see in the course of our investigation, both that it is inferior to that which we receive when there is no deception at all, and why it is so.

§ 7. Recapitulation.

Whenever then in future, I speak of ideas of imitation, I wish to be understood to mean the immediate and present perception that something produced by art is not what it seems to be. I prefer saying "that it is not what it seems to be," to saying "that it seems to be what it is not," because we perceive at once what it seems to be, and the idea of imitation, and the consequent pleasure, result from the subsequent perception of its being something else—flat, for instance, when we thought it was round.

CHAPTER V.

OF IDEAS OF TRUTH.

THE word truth, as applied to art, signifies the faithful statement, either to the mind or senses, of any fact of nature.

§ 1. Meaning of the word "truth" as applied to art.

We receive an idea of truth, then, when we perceive the faithfulness of such a statement. The difference between ideas of truth and of imitation lies chiefly in the following points.

First,—Imitation can only be of something material, but truth has reference to statements both of the qualities of material things, and of emotions, impressions, and thoughts. There is a moral as well as material truth,—a truth of impression as well as of form,—of thought as well as of matter; and the truth of impression and thought is a thousand times the more important of the two. Hence, truth is a term of universal application, but imitation is limited to that narrow field of art which takes cognizance only of material things.

§ 2. First difference between truth and imitation.

Secondly,—Truth may be stated by any signs or symbols which have a definite signification in the minds of those to whom they are addressed, although such signs be themselves no image nor likeness of anything. Whatever can excite in the mind the conception of certain facts, can give ideas of truth, though it be in no degree the imitation or resemblance of those facts. If there be—we do not say there is—but if there be in painting anything which operates,

§ 3. Second difference.

as words do, not by resembling anything, but by being taken as a symbol and substitute for it, and thus inducing the effect of it, then this channel of communication can convey uncorrupted truth, though it do not in any degree resemble the facts whose conception it induces. But ideas of imitation, of course, require the likeness of the object. They speak to the perceptive faculties only: truth to the conceptive.

§ 4. Third difference.

Thirdly,—And in consequence of what is above stated, an idea of truth exists in the statement of *one* attribute of anything, but an idea of imitation requires the resemblance of as many attributes as we are usually cognizant of in its real presence. A pencil outline of the bough of a tree on white paper is a statement of a certain number of facts of form. It does not yet amount to the imitation of anything. The idea of that form is not given in nature by lines at all, still less by black lines with a white space between them. But those lines convey to the mind a distinct impression of a certain number of facts, which it recognizes as agreeable with its previous impressions of the bough of a tree; and it receives, therefore, an idea of truth. If, instead of two lines, we give a dark form with the brush, we convey information of a certain relation of shade between the bough and sky, recognizable for another idea of truth; but we have still no imitation, for the white paper is not the least like air, nor the black shadow like wood. It is not until after a certain number of ideas of truth have been collected together, that we arrive at an idea of imitation.

§ 5. No accurate truths necessary to imitation.

Hence it might at first sight appear, that an idea of imitation, inasmuch as several ideas of truth were united in it, was nobler than a simple idea of truth. And if it were necessary that the ideas of truth should be perfect, or should be subjects of contemplation *as such*, it would be so.

But, observe, we require to produce the effect of imitation only so many and such ideas of truth as the *senses* are usually cognizant of. Now the senses are not usually, nor unless they be especially devoted to the service, cognizant, with accuracy, of any truths but those of space and projection. It requires long study and attention before they give certain evidence of even the simplest truths of form. For instance, the quay on which the figure is sitting, with his hand at his eyes, in Claude's seaport, No. 14, in the National Gallery, is egregiously out of perspective. The eye of this artist, with all his study, had thus not acquired the power of taking cognizance of the apparent form even of a simple parallelopiped. How much less of the complicated forms of boughs, leaves, or limbs? Although, therefore, something resembling the real form is necessary to deception, this something is not to be called a *truth* of form; for, strictly speaking, there are no degrees of truth, there are only degrees of approach to it; and an approach to it, whose feebleness and imperfection would instantly offend and give pain to a mind really capable of distinguishing truth, is yet quite sufficient for all the purposes of deceptive imagination. It is the same with regard to color. If we were to paint a tree sky-blue, or a dog rose-pink, the discernment of the public would be keen enough to discover the falsehood; but, so that there be just so much approach to truth of color as may come up to the common idea of it in men's minds, that is to say, if the trees be all bright green, and flesh unbroken buff, and ground unbroken brown, though all the real and refined truths of color be wholly omitted, or rather defied and contradicted, there is yet quite enough for all purposes of imitation. The only facts then, which we are usually and certainly cognizant of, are those of distance and projection, and if these be tolerably given, with something like truth of form and color to assist them,

the idea of imitation is complete. I would undertake to paint an arm, with every muscle out of its place, and every bone of false form and dislocated articulation, and yet to observe certain coarse and broad resemblances of true outline, which, with careful shading, would induce deception, and draw down the praise and delight of the discerning public. The other day at Bruges, while I was endeavoring to set down in my note-book something of the ineffable expression of the Madonna in the cathedral, a French amateur came up to me, to inquire if I had seen the modern French pictures in a neighboring church. I had not, but felt little inclined to leave my marble for all the canvas that ever suffered from French brushes. My apathy was attacked with gradually increasing energy of praise. Rubens never executed—Titian never colored anything like them. I thought this highly probable, and still sat quiet. The voice continued at my ear. "Parbleu, Monsieur, Michel-Ange n'a rien produit de plus beau!" "De plus *beau?*" repeated I, wishing to know what particular excellences of Michael Angelo were to be intimated by this expression. "Monsieur, on ne peut plus—c'est un tableau admirable—inconcevable: Monsieur," said the Frenchman, lifting up his hands to heaven, as he concentrated in one conclusive and overwhelming proposition the qualities which were to outshine Rubens and overpower Buonaroti—"Monsieur, IL SORT!"

This gentleman could only perceive two truths—flesh color and projection. These constituted his notion of the perfection of painting; because they unite all that is necessary for deception. He was not therefore cognizant of many ideas of truth, though perfectly cognizant of ideas of imitation.

§ 6. Ideas of truth are inconsistent with ideas of imitation.

We shall see, in the course of our investigation of ideas of truth, that ideas of imitation not only do not imply their pres-

ence, but even are inconsistent with it; and that pictures which imitate so as to deceive, are never true. But this is not the place for the proof of this; at present we have only to insist on the last and greatest distinction between ideas of truth and of imitation—that the mind, in receiving one of the former, dwells upon its own conception of the fact, or form, or feeling stated, and is occupied only with the qualities and character of that fact or form, considering it as real and existing, being all the while totally regardless of the signs or symbols by which the notion of it has been conveyed. These signs have no pretence, nor hypocrisy, nor legerdemain about them;—there is nothing to be found out, or sifted, or surprised in them;—they bear their message simply and clearly, and it is that message which the mind takes from them and dwells upon, regardless of the language in which it is delivered. But the mind, in receiving an idea of imitation, is wholly occupied in finding out that what has been suggested to it is not what it appears to be: it does not dwell on the suggestion, but on the perception that it is a false suggestion: it derives its pleasure, not from the contemplation of a truth, but from the discovery of a falsehood. So that the moment ideas of truth are grouped together, so as to give rise to an idea of imitation, they change their very nature—lose their essence as ideas of truth—and are corrupted and degraded, so as to share in the treachery of what they have produced. Hence, finally, ideas of truth are the foundation, and ideas of imitation the destruction, of all art. We shall be better able to appreciate their relative dignity after the investigation which we propose of the functions of the former; but we may as well now express the conclusion to which we shall then be led—that no picture can be good which deceives by its imitation, for the very reason that nothing can be beautiful which is not true.

CHAPTER VI.

OF IDEAS OF BEAUTY.

§ 1. Definition of the term "beautiful."

ANY material object which can give us pleasure in the simple contemplation of its outward qualities without any direct and definite exertion of the intellect, I call in some way, or in some degree, beautiful. Why we receive pleasure from some forms and colors, and not from others, is no more to be asked or answered than why we like sugar and dislike wormwood. The utmost subtilty of investigation will only lead us to ultimate instincts and principles of human nature, for which no farther reason can be given than the simple will of the Deity that we should be so created. We may, indeed, perceive, as far as we are acquainted with His nature, that we have been so constructed as, when in a healthy and cultivated state of mind, to derive pleasure from whatever things are illustrative of that nature; but we do not receive pleasure from them *because* they are illustrative of it, nor from any perception that they are illustrative of it, but instinctively and necessarily, as we derive sensual pleasure from the scent of a rose. On these primary principles of our nature, education and accident operate to an unlimited extent; they may be cultivated or checked, directed or diverted, gifted by right guidance with the most acute and faultless sense, or subjected by neglect to every phase of error and disease. He who has followed up these natural laws of aversion and desire, rendering them more and more authoritative by constant

obedience, so as to derive pleasure always from that which God originally intended should give him pleasure, and who derives the greatest possible sum of pleasure from any given object, is a man of taste.

This, then, is the real meaning of this disputed word. Perfect taste is the faculty of receiving the greatest possible pleasure from those material sources which are attractive to our moral nature in its purity and perfection. He who receives little pleasure from these sources, wants taste; he who receives pleasure from any other sources, has false or bad taste.

§ 2. Definition of the term "taste."

And it is thus that the term "taste" is to be distinguished from that of "judgment," with which it is constantly confounded Judgment is a general term, expressing definite action of the intellect, and applicable to every kind of subject which can be submitted to it. There may be judgment of congruity, judgment of truth, judgment of justice, and judgment of difficulty and excellence. But all these exertions of the intellect are totally distinct from taste, properly so called, which is the instinctive and instant preferring of one material object to another without any obvious reason, except that it is proper to human nature in its perfection so to do.

§ 3. Distinction between taste and judgment.

Observe, however, I do not mean by excluding direct exertion of the intellect from ideas of beauty, to assert that beauty has no effect upon nor connection with the intellect. All our moral feelings are so inwoven with our intellectual powers, that we cannot affect the one without in some degree addressing the other; and in all high ideas of beauty, it is more than probable that much of the pleasure depends on delicate and untraceable perceptions of fitness, propriety, and relation, which are pure-

§ 4. How far beauty may become intellectual.

ly intellectual, and through which we arrive at our noblest ideas of what is commonly and rightly called "intellectual beauty." But there is yet no immediate *exertion* of the intellect; that is to say, if a person receiving even the noblest ideas of simple beauty be asked *why* he likes the object exciting them, he will not be able to give any distinct reason, nor to trace in his mind any formed thought, to which he can appeal as a source of pleasure. He will say that the thing gratifies, fills, hallows, exalts his mind, but he will not be able to say why, or how. If he can, and if he can show that he perceives in the object any expression of distinct thought, he has received more than an idea of beauty—it is an idea of relation.

Ideas of beauty are among the noblest which can be presented to the human mind, invariably exalting and purifying it according to their degree; and it would appear that we are intended by the Deity to be constantly under their influence, because there is not one single object in nature which is not capable of conveying them, and which, to the rightly perceiving mind, does not present an incalculably greater number of beautiful than of deformed parts; there being in fact scarcely anything, in pure, undiseased nature, like positive deformity, but only degrees of beauty, or such slight and rare points of permitted contrast as may render all around them more valuable by their opposition, spots of blackness in creation, to make its colors felt.

§ 5. The high rank and function of ideas of beauty.

But although everything in nature is more or less beautiful, every species of object has its own kind and degree of beauty; some being in their own nature more beautiful than others, and few, if any, individuals possessing the utmost degree of beauty of which the species is capable. This utmost degree of specific beauty, necessarily coexistent

§ 6. Meaning of the term "ideal beauty."

with the utmost perfection of the object in other respects, is the ideal of the object.

Ideas of beauty, then, be it remembered, are the subjects of moral, but not of intellectual, perception. By the investigation of them we shall be led to the knowledge of the ideal subjects of art.

CHAPTER VII.

OF IDEAS OF RELATION.

I USE this term rather as one of convenience than as adequately expressive of the vast class of ideas which I wish to be comprehended under it, namely, all those conveyable by art, which are the subjects of distinct intellectual perception and action, and which are therefore worthy of the name of thoughts. But as every thought, or definite exertion of intellect, implies two subjects, and some connection or relation inferred between them, the term "ideas of relation" is not incorrect, though it is inexpressive.

§ 1. General meaning of the term.

Under this head must be arranged everything productive of expression, sentiment, and character, whether in figures or landscapes, (for there may be as much definite expression and marked carrying out of particular thoughts in the treatment of inanimate as of animate nature,) everything relating to the conception of the subject and to the congruity and relation of its parts; not as they enhance each other's beauty by known and constant laws of composition, but as they give each other expression and meaning, by particular application, requiring distinct thought to discover or to enjoy: the choice, for instance, of a particular lurid or appalling light, to illustrate an incident in itself terrible, or of a particular tone of pure color to prepare the mind for the expression of refined and delicate feeling: and, in a still higher sense, the invention of such incidents and thoughts as

§ 2. What ideas are to be comprehended under it.

can be expressed in words as well as on canvas, and are totally independent of any means of art but such as may serve for the bare suggestion of them. The principal object in the foreground of Turner's "Building of Carthage" is a group of children sailing toy-boats. The exquisite choice of this incident, as expressive of the ruling passion, which was to be the source of future greatness, in preference to the tumult of busy stone-masons or arming soldiers, is quite as appreciable when it is told as when it is seen,—it has nothing to do with the technicalities of painting; a scratch of the pen would have conveyed the idea and spoken to the intellect as much as the elaborate realizations of color. Such a thought as this is something far above all art; it is epic poetry of the highest order. Claude, in subjects of the same kind, commonly introduces people carrying red trunks with iron locks about, and dwells, with infantine delight, on the lustre of the leather and the ornaments of the iron. The intellect can have no occupation here; we must look to the imitation or to nothing. Consequently, Turner rises above Claude in the very first instant of the conception of his picture, and acquires an intellectual superiority which no powers of the draughtsman or the artist (supposing that such existed in his antagonist) could ever wrest from him.

§ 3. The exceeding nobility of these ideas.

Such are the function and force of ideas of relation. They are what I have asserted in the second chapter of this section to be the noblest subjects of art. Dependent upon it only for expression, they cause all the rest of its complicated sources of pleasure to take, in comparison with them, the place of mere language or decoration; nay, even the noblest ideas of beauty sink at once beside these into subordination and subjection. It would add little to the influence of Landseer's picture above instanced, Chap. II., § 4, that the form of the dog should

be conceived with every perfection of curve and color which its nature was capable of, and that the ideal lines should be carried out with the science of a Praxiteles; nay, the instant that the beauty so obtained interfered with the impression of agony and desolation, and drew the mind away from the feeling of the animal to its outward form, that instant would the picture become monstrous and degraded. The utmost glory of the human body is a mean subject of contemplation, compared to the emotion, exertion and character of that which animates it; the lustre of the limbs of the Aphrodite is faint beside that of the brow of the Madonna; and the divine form of the Greek god, except as it is the incarnation and expression of divine mind, is degraded beside the passion and the prophecy of the vaults of the Sistine.

§ 4. Why no subdivision of so extensive a class is necessary.

Ideas of relation are, of course, with respect to art generally, the most extensive as the most important source of pleasure; and if we proposed entering upon the criticism of historical works, it would be absurd to attempt to do so without further subdivision and arrangement. But the old landscape painters got over so much canvas without either exercise of, or appeal to, the intellect, that we shall be little troubled with the subject as far as they are concerned; and whatever subdivision we may adopt, as it will therefore have particular reference to the works of modern artists, will be better understood when we have obtained some knowledge of them in less important points.

By the term "ideas of relation," then, I mean in future to express all those sources of pleasure which involve and require, at the instant of their perception, active exertion of the intellectual powers.

SECTION II.

OF POWER.

CHAPTER I.

GENERAL PRINCIPLES RESPECTING IDEAS OF POWER.

We have seen in the last section, what classes of ideas may be conveyed by art, and we have been able so far to appreciate their relative worth as to see, that from the list, as it is to be applied to the purposes of legitimate criticism, we may at once throw out the ideas of imitation; first, because, as we have shown, they are unworthy the pursuit of the artist; and secondly, because they are nothing more than the result of a particular association of ideas of truth. In examining the truth of art, therefore, we shall be compelled to take notice of those particular truths, whose association gives rise to the ideas of imitation. We shall then see more clearly the meanness of those truths, and we shall find ourselves able to use them as tests of vice in art, saying of a picture,—"It deceives, therefore it must be bad."

§ 1. No necessity for detailed study of ideas of imitation.

Ideas of power, in the same way, cannot be completely viewed as a separate class; not because they are mean or unimportant, but because they are almost always associated with, or dependent upon, some of the higher ideas of truth, beauty, or relation, rendered with decision or velocity. That power which delights us in the chalk

§ 2. Nor for separate study of ideas of power.

sketch of a great painter is not one of the fingers, not like that of the writing-master, mere dexterity of hand. It is the accuracy and certainty of the knowledge, rendered evident by its rapid and fearless expression, which is the real source of pleasure; and so upon each difficulty of art, whether it be to know, or to relate, or to invent, the sensation of power is attendant, when we see that difficulty totally and swiftly vanquished. Hence, as we determine what is otherwise desirable in art, we shall gradually develop the sources of the ideas of power; and if there be anything difficult which is not otherwise desirable, it must be afterward considered separately.

§ 3. Except under one particular form.

But it will be necessary at present to notice a particular form of the ideas of power, which is partially independent of knowledge of truth, or difficulty, and which is apt to corrupt the judgment of the critic, and debase the work of the artist. It is evident that the conception of power which we receive from a calculation of unseen difficulty, and an estimate of unseen strength, can never be so impressive as that which we receive from the present sensation or sight of the one resisting, and the other overwhelming. In the one case the power is imagined, and in the other felt.

§ 4. There are two modes of receiving ideas of power, commonly inconsistent.

There are thus two modes in which we receive the conception of power; one, the most just, when by a perfect knowledge of the difficulty to be overcome, and the means employed, we form a right estimate of the faculties exerted; the other, when without possessing such intimate and accurate knowledge, we are impressed by a sensation of power in visible action. If these two modes of receiving the impression agree in the result, and if the sensation be equal to the estimate, we receive the utmost possible idea of power. But this is the case

perhaps with the works of only one man out of the whole circle of the fathers of art, of him to whom we have just referred, Michael Angelo. In others, the estimate and the sensation are constantly unequal, and often contradictory.

§ 5. First reason of the inconsistency.

The first reason of this inconsistency is, that in order to receive a *sensation* of power, we must see it in operation. Its victory, therefore, must not be achieved, but achieving, and therefore imperfect. Thus we receive a greater sensation of power from the half-hewn limbs of the Twilight to the Day of the Cappella de' Medici, than even from the divine inebriety of the Bacchus in the gallery —greater from the life dashed out along the Friezes of the Parthenon, than from the polished limbs of the Apollo,—greater from the ink sketch of the head of Raffaele's St. Catherine, than from the perfection of its realization.

§ 6. Second reason for the inconsistency.

Another reason of the inconsistency is, that the sensation of power is in proportion to the apparent inadequacy of the means to the end; so that the impression is much greater from a partial success attained with slight effort, than from perfect success attained with greater proportional effort. Now, in all art, every touch or effort does individually less in proportion as the work approaches perfection. The first five chalk touches bring a head into existence out of nothing. No five touches in the whole course of the work will ever do so much as these, and the difference made by each touch is more and more imperceptible as the work approaches completion. Consequently, the ratio between the means employed and the effect produced is constantly decreasing, and therefore the least sensation of power is received from the most perfect work.

It is thus evident that there are sensations of power

about imperfect art, so that it be right art as far as it goes, which must always be wanting in its perfection; and that there are sources of pleasure in the hasty sketch and rough hewn block, which are partially wanting in the tinted canvas and the polished marble. But it is nevertheless wrong to prefer the sensation of power to the intellectual perception of it. There is in reality greater power in the completion than in the commencement; and though it be not so manifest to the senses, it ought to have higher influence on the mind; and therefore in praising pictures for the ideas of power they convey, we must not look to the keenest sensation, but to the highest estimate, accompanied with as much of the sensation as is compatible with it; and thus we shall consider those pictures as conveying the highest ideas of power which attain the most *perfect* end with the slightest possible means; not, observe, those in which, though much has been done with little, all has not been done, but from the picture, in which *all* has been done, and yet not a touch thrown away. The quantity of work in the sketch is necessarily less in proportion to the effect obtained than in the picture; but yet the picture involves the greater power, if out of all the additional labor bestowed on it, not a touch has been lost.

§ 7. The sensation of power ought not to be sought in imperfect art.

For instance, there are few drawings of the present day that involve greater sensations of power than those of Frederick Tayler. Every dash tells, and the quantity of effect obtained is enormous, in proportion to the apparent means. But the effect obtained is not complete. Brilliant, beautiful, and right, as a sketch, the work is still far from perfection, as a drawing. On the contrary, there are few drawings of the present day that bear evidence of more labor bestowed, or more complicated means employed, than those of John Lewis. The result

§ 8. Instances in pictures of modern artists.

does not, at first, so much convey an impression of inherent power as of prolonged exertion; but the result is complete. Water-color drawing can be carried no farther; nothing has been left unfinished or untold. And on examination of the means employed, it is found and felt that not one touch out of the thousands employed has been thrown away;—that not one dot nor dash could be spared without loss of effect;—and that the exertion has been as swift as it has been prolonged—as bold as it has been persevering. The power involved in such a picture is of the highest order, and the enduring pleasure following on the estimate of it pure.

§ 9. Connection between ideas of power and modes of execution.

But there is still farther ground for caution in pursuing the sensation of power, connected with the particular characters and modes of execution. This we shall be better able to understand by briefly reviewing the various excellences which may belong to execution, and give pleasure in it; though the full determination of what is desirable in it, and the critical examination of the execution of different artists, must be deferred, as will be immediately seen, until we are more fully acquainted with the principles of truth.

CHAPTER II.

OF IDEAS OF POWER, AS THEY ARE DEPENDENT UPON EXECUTION.

§ 1. Meaning of the term "execution."

By the term "execution," I understand the right mechanical use of the means of art to produce a given end.

All qualities of execution, properly so called, are influenced by, and in a great degree dependent on, a far higher power than that of mere execution,—knowledge of truth. For exactly in proportion as an artist is certain of his end, will he be swift and simple in his means; and, as he is accurate and deep in his knowledge, will he be refined and precise in his touch. The first merit of manipulation, then, is that delicate and ceaseless expression of refined truth which is carried out to the last touch, and shadow of a touch, and which makes every hairsbreadth of importance, and every gradation full of meaning. It is not, properly speaking, execution; but it is the only source of difference between the execution of a commonplace and of a perfect artist. The lowest draughtsman, if he have spent the same time in handling the brush, may be equal to the highest in the other qualities of execution (in swiftness, simplicity, and decision;) but not in truth. It is in the perfection and precision of the instantaneous line that the claim to immortality is laid. And if this truth of truths be present, all the other qualities of execution may well be spared; and to those artists who wish to excuse their

§ 2. The first quality of execution is truth.

ignorance and inaccuracy by a species of execution which is a perpetual proclamation, "qu'ils n'ont demeuré qu'un quart d'heure à le faire," we may reply with the truthful Alceste, "Monsieur, le temps ne fait rien à l'affaire."

The second quality of execution is simplicity. The more unpretending, quiet, and retiring the means, the more impressive their effect. Any ostentation, brilliancy, or pretension of touch, —any exhibition of power or quickness, merely as such, above all, any attempt to render lines attractive at the expense of their meaning, is vice.

§ 3. The second, simplicity.

The third is mystery. Nature is always mysterious and secret in the use of her means; and art is always likest her when it is most inexplicable. That execution which is the most incomprehensible, and which therefore defies imitation, (other qualities being supposed alike,) is the best.

§ 4. The third, mystery.

The fourth is inadequacy. The less sufficient the means appear to the end, the greater (as has been already noticed) will be the sensation of power.

§ 5. The fourth, inadequacy; and the fifth, decision.

The fifth is decision: the appearance, that is, that whatever is done, has been done fearlessly and at once; because this gives us the impression that both the fact to be represented, and the means necessary to its representation, were perfectly known.

The sixth is velocity. Not only is velocity, or the appearance of it, agreeable as decision is, because it gives ideas of power and knowledge; but of two touches, as nearly as possible the same in other respects, the quickest will invariably be the best. Truth being supposed equally present in the shape and direction of both, there will be more evenness, grace and variety in the quick one than in the

§ 6. The sixth, velocity.

slow one. It will be more agreeable to the eye as a touch or line, and will possess more of the qualities of the lines of nature—gradation, uncertainty, and unity.

These six qualities are the only perfectly legitimate sources of pleasure in execution; but I might have added a seventh—strangeness, which in many cases is productive of a pleasure not altogether mean or degrading, though scarcely right. Supposing the other higher qualities first secured, it adds in no small degree to our impression of the artist's knowledge, if the means used be such as we should never have thought of, or should have thought adapted to a contrary effect. Let us, for instance, compare the execution of the bull's head in the left-hand lowest corner of the Adoration of the Magi, in the Museum at Antwerp, with that in Berghem's landscape, No. 132, in the Dulwich gallery. Rubens first scratches horizontally over his canvas a thin grayish brown, transparent and even, very much the color of light wainscot; the horizontal strokes of the bristles being left so evident, that the whole might be taken for an imitation of wood, were it not for its transparency. On this ground the eye, nostril, and outline of the cheek are given with two or three rude, brown touches (about three or four minutes' work in all), though the head is colossal. The background is then laid in with thick, solid, warm white, actually projecting all round the head, leaving it in dark intaglio. Finally, five thin and scratchy strokes of very cold bluish white are struck for the high light on the forehead and the nose, and the head is complete. Seen within a yard of the canvas, it looks actually transparent—a flimsy, meaningless, distant shadow; while the background looks solid, projecting, and near. From the right distance, (ten or twelve yards off, whence alone the whole of the picture can be seen,) it is a complete, rich, substantial, and living realization of the projecting head

§ 7. Strangeness an illegitimate source of pleasure in execution.

of the animal; while the background falls far behind. Now, there is no slight nor mean pleasure in perceiving such a result attained by means so strange. By Berghem, on the other hand, a dark background is first laid in with exquisite delicacy and transparency, and on this the cow's head is actually modelled in luminous white, the separate locks of hair projecting from the canvas. No surprise, nor much pleasure of any kind, would be attendant on this execution, even were the result equally successful; and what little pleasure we had in it vanishes, when on retiring from the picture, we find the head shining like a distant lantern, instead of substantial or near Yet strangeness is not to be considered as a legitimate source of pleasure. That means which is most conducive to the end, should always be the most pleasurable; and that which is most conducive to the end, can be strange only to the ignorance of the spectator. This kind of pleasure is illegitimate, therefore, because it implies and requires, in those who feel it, ignorance of art.

§ 8. Yet even the legitimate sources of pleasure in execution are inconsistent with each other.

The legitimate sources of pleasure in execution are therefore truth, simplicity, mystery, inadequacy, decision, and velocity. But of these, be it observed, some are so far inconsistent with others, that they cannot be united in high degrees. Mystery with inadequacy, for instance; since to see that the means are inadequate, we must see what they are. Now, the first three are the great qualities of execution, and the last three are the attractive ones, because on them are chiefly attendant the ideas of power. By the first three the attention is withdrawn from the means and fixed on the result: by the last three, withdrawn from the result and fixed on the means. To see that execution is swift or that it is decided, we must look away from its creation to observe it in the act of creating; we must think more of the pal-

let than of the picture, but simplicity and mystery compel the mind to leave the means and fix itself on the conception. Hence the danger of too great fondness for those sensations of power which are associated with the three last qualities of execution; for although it is most desirable that these should be present as far as they are consistent with the others, and though their visible absence is always painful and wrong, yet the moment the higher qualities are sacrificed to them in the least degree, we have a brilliant vice. Berghem and Salvator Rosa are good instances of vicious execution dependent on too great fondness for sensations of power, vicious because intrusive and attractive in itself, instead of being subordinate to its results and forgotten in them. There is perhaps no greater stumbling-block in the artist's way, than the tendency to sacrifice truth and simplicity to decision and velocity,* captivating qualities, easy of attainment, and sure to attract attention and praise, while the delicate degree of truth which is at first sacrificed to them is so totally unappreciable by the majority of spectators, so difficult of attainment to the artist, that it is no wonder that efforts so arduous and

§ 9. And fondness for ideas of power leads to the adoption of the lowest.

* I have here noticed only noble vices, the sacrifices of one excellence to another legitimate but inferior one. There are, on the other hand, qualities of execution which are often sought for and praised, though scarcely by the class of persons for whom I am writing, in which everything is sacrificed to illegitimate and contemptible sources of pleasure, and these are vice throughout, and have no redeeming quality nor excusing aim. Such is that which is often thought so desirable in the Drawing-master, under the title of boldness, meaning that no touch is ever to be made less than the tenth of an inch broad; such, on the other hand, the softness and smoothness which are the great attraction of Carlo Dolci, and such the exhibition of particular powers and tricks of the hand and fingers, in total forgetfulness of any end whatsoever to be attained thereby, which is especially characteristic of modern engraving. Compare Sect. II. Chap. II. § 21. Note.

unrewarded should be abandoned. But if the temptation be once yielded to, its consequences are fatal; there is no pause in the fall. I could name a celebrated modern artist—once a man of the highest power and promise, who is a glaring instance of the peril of such a course. Misled by the undue popularity of his swift execution, he has sacrificed to it, first precision, and then truth, and her associate, beauty. What was first neglect of nature, has become contradiction of her; what was once imperfection, is now falsehood; and all that was meritorious in his manner is becoming the worst, because the most attractive, of vices; decision without a foundation, and swiftness without an end.

§ 10. Therefore perilous.

Such are the principal modes in which the ideas of power may become a dangerous attraction to the artist —a false test to the critic. But in all cases where they lead us astray it will be found that the error is caused by our preferring victory over a small *apparent* difficulty to victory over a great, but concealed, one; and so that we keep this distinction constantly in view, (whether with reference to execution or to any other quality of art,) between the sensation and the intellectual estimate of power, we shall always find the ideas of power a just and high source of pleasure in every kind and grade of art.

§ 11. Recapitulation.

CHAPTER III.

OF THE SUBLIME.

It may perhaps be wondered that in the division we have made of our subject, we have taken no notice of the sublime in art, and that in our explanation of that division we have not once used the word.

The fact is, that sublimity is not a specific term,—not a term descriptive of the effect of a particular class of ideas. Anything which elevates the mind is sublime, and elevation of mind is produced by the contemplation of greatness of any kind; but chiefly, of course, by the greatness of the noblest things. Sublimity is, therefore, only another word for the effect of greatness upon the feelings. Greatness of matter, space, power, virtue, or beauty, are thus all sublime; and there is perhaps no desirable quality of a work of art, which in its perfection is not, in some way or degree, sublime.

§ 1. Sublimity is the effect upon the mind of anything above it.

I am fully prepared to allow of much ingenuity in Burke's theory of the sublime, as connected with self-preservation. There are few things so great as death; and there is perhaps nothing which banishes all littleness of thought and feeling in an equal degree with its contemplation. Everything, therefore, which in any way points to it, and, therefore, most dangers and powers over which we have little control, are in some degree sublime. But it is not the fear, observe, but the contemplation of death; not the instinctive shudder and

§ 2. Burke's theory of the nature of the sublime incorrect, and why.

struggle of self-preservation, but the deliberate measurement of the doom, which are really great or sublime in feeling. It is not while we shrink, but while we defy, that we receive or convey the highest conceptions of the fate. There is no sublimity in the agony of terror. Whether do we trace it most in the cry to the mountains, "fall on us," and to the hills, "cover us," or in the calmness of the prophecy—"And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh I shall see God?" A little reflection will easily convince any one, that so far from the feelings of self-preservation being necessary to the sublime, their greatest action is totally destructive of it; and that there are few feelings less capable of its perception than those of a coward. But the simple conception or idea of greatness of suffering or extent of destruction is sublime, whether there be any connection of that idea with ourselves or not. If we were placed beyond the reach of all peril or pain, the perception of these agencies in their influence on others would not be less sublime, not because peril or pain are sublime in their own nature, but because their contemplation, exciting compassion or fortitude, elevates the mind, and renders meanness of thought impossible.

§ 3. Danger is sublime, but not the fear of it.

Beauty is not so often felt to be sublime; because, in many kinds of purely material beauty there is some truth in Burke's assertion, that "littleness" is one of its elements. But he who has not felt that there may be beauty without littleness, and that such beauty is a source of the sublime, is yet ignorant of the meaning of the ideal in art. I do not mean, in tracing the source of the sublime to greatness, to hamper myself with any fine-spun theory. I take the widest possible ground of investigation, that sublimity is found wherever anything elevates the mind; that is, wherever it contemplates anything

§ 4. The highest beauty is sublime.

§ 5. And generally whatever elevates the mind.

above itself, and perceives it to be so. This is the simple philological signification of the word derived from *sublimis;* and will serve us much more easily, and be a far clearer and more evident ground of argument, than any mere metaphysical or more limited definition, while the proof of its justness will be naturally developed by its application to the different branches of art.

As, therefore, the sublime is not distinct from what is beautiful, nor from other sources of pleasure in art, but is only a particular mode and manifestation of them, my subject will divide itself into the investigation of ideas of truth, beauty, and relation; and to each of these classes of ideas I destine a separate part of the work. The investigation of ideas of truth will enable us to determine the relative rank of artists as followers and historians of nature.

§ 6. The former division of the subject is therefore sufficient.

That of ideas of beauty will lead us to compare them in their attainment, first of what is agreeable in technical matters, then in color and composition, finally and chiefly, in the purity of their conceptions of the ideal.

And that of ideas of relation will lead us to compare them as originators of just thought.

PART II.

OF TRUTH.

SECTION I.

GENERAL PRINCIPLES RESPECTING IDEAS OF TRUTH.

CHAPTER I.

OF IDEAS OF TRUTH IN THEIR CONNECTION WITH THOSE OF BEAUTY AND RELATION.

It cannot but be evident, from the above division of the ideas conveyable by art, that the landscape painter must always have two great and distinct ends; the first, to induce in the spectator's mind the faithful conception of any natural objects whatsoever; the second, to guide the spectator's mind to those objects most worthy of its contemplation, and to inform him of the thoughts and feelings with which these were regarded by the artist himself.

§ 1. The two great ends of landscape painting are the representation of facts and thoughts.

In attaining the first end, the painter only places the spectator where he stands himself; he sets him before the landscape and leaves him. The spectator is alone. He may follow out his own thoughts as he would in the natural solitude, or he may remain untouched, unreflecting and regardless, as his disposition may incline him.

But he has nothing of thought given to him, no new ideas, no unknown feelings, forced on his attention or his heart. The artist is his conveyance, not his companion,—his horse, not his friend. But in attaining the second end, the artist not only *places* the spectator, but *talks* to him; makes him a sharer in his own strong feelings and quick thoughts; hurries him away in his own enthusiasm; guides him to all that is beautiful; snatches him from all that is base, and leaves him more than delighted,—ennobled and instructed, under the sense of having not only beheld a new scene, but of having held communion with a new mind, and having been endowed for a time with the keen perception and the impetuous emotion of a nobler and more penetrating intelligence.

Each of these different aims of art will necessitate a different system of choice of objects to be represented.

§ 2. They induce a different choice of material subjects.

The first does not indeed imply choice at all, but it is usually united with the selection of such objects as may be naturally and constantly pleasing to all men, at all times; and this selection, when perfect and careful, leads to the attainment of the pure ideal. But the artist aiming at the second end, selects his objects for their meaning and character, rather than for their beauty; and uses them rather to throw light upon the particular thought he wishes to convey, than as in themselves objects of unconnected admiration.

Now, although the first mode of selection, when guided by deep reflection, may rise to the production of works possessing a noble and ceaseless influence on the human mind, it is likely to degenerate into, or rather, in nine cases out of ten, it never goes beyond, a mere appeal to such parts of our animal nature as are constant and common—shared by all, and perpetual in all; such, for instance, as the pleasure of the eye in the opposition of a cold and warm

§ 3. The first mode of selection apt to produce sameness and repetition.

color, or of a massy form with a delicate one. It also tends to induce constant repetition of the same ideas, and reference to the same principles; it gives rise to those *rules* of art which properly excited Reynolds's indignation when applied to its higher efforts; it is the source of, and the apology for, that host of technicalities and absurdities which in all ages have been the curse of art and the crown of the connoisseur.

But art, in its second and highest aim, is not an appeal to constant animal feelings, but an expression and awakening of individual thought: it is therefore as various and as extended in its efforts as the compass and grasp of the directing mind; and we feel, in each of its results, that we are looking, not at a specimen of a tradesman's wares, of which he is ready to make us a dozen to match, but at one coruscation of a perpetually active mind, like which there has not been, and will not be, another.

§ 4. The second necessitating variety.

Hence, although there can be no doubt which of these branches of art is the highest, it is equally evident that the first will be the most generally felt and appreciated. For the simple statement of the truths of nature must in itself be pleasing to every order of mind; because every truth of nature is more or less beautiful; and if there be just and right selection of the more important of these truths—based, as above explained, on feelings and desires common to all mankind—the facts so selected must, in some degree, be delightful to all, and their value appreciable by all: more or less, indeed, as their senses and instinct have been rendered more or less acute and accurate by use and study; but in some degree by all, and in the same way by all. But the highest art, being based on sensations of peculiar minds, sensations occurring to *them* only at particular times, and to a plurality of mankind perhaps never, and being expressive

§ 5. Yet the first is delightful to all.

§ 6. The second only to a few.

of thoughts which could only rise out of a mass of the most extended knowledge, and of dispositions modified in a thousand ways by peculiarity of intellect—can only be met and understood by persons having some sort of sympathy with the high and solitary minds which produced it—sympathy only to be felt by minds in some degree high and solitary themselves. He alone can appreciate the art, who could comprehend the conversation of the painter, and share in his emotion, in moments of his most fiery passion and most original thought. And whereas the true meaning and end of his art must thus be sealed to thousands, or misunderstood by them; so also, as he is sometimes obliged, in working out his own peculiar end, to set at defiance those constant laws which have arisen out of our lower and changeless desires, that whose purpose is unseen, is frequently in its means and parts displeasing.

But this want of extended influence in high art, be it especially observed, proceeds from no want of truth in the art itself, but from a want of sympathy in the spectator with those feelings in the artist which prompt him to the utterance of one truth rather than of another. / For (and this is what I wish at present especially to insist upon) although it is possible to reach what I have stated to be the first end of art, the representation of facts, without reaching the second, the representation of thoughts, yet it is altogether impossible to reach the second without having previously reached the first./ I do not say that a man cannot think, having false basis and material for thought; but that a false thought is worse than the want of thought, and therefore is not art. And this is the reason why, though I consider the second as the real and only important end of all art, I call the representation of facts the first end; because it is necessary to the other, and must be attained before it. It is the founda-

§ 7. The first necessary to the second.

tion of all art; like real foundations it may be little thought of when a brilliant fabric is raised on it; but it must be there: and as few buildings are beautiful unless every line and column of their mass have reference to their foundation, and are suggestive of its existence and strength, so nothing can be beautiful in art which does not in all its parts suggest and guide to the foundation, even where no undecorated portion of it is visible; while the noblest edifices of art are built of such pure and fine crystal that the foundation may all be seen through them; and then many, while they do not see what is built upon that first story, yet much admire the solidity of its brickwork; thinking they understand all that is to be understood of the matter; while others stand beside them, looking not at the low story, but up into the heaven at that building of crystal in which the builder's spirit is dwelling. And thus, though we want the thoughts and feelings of the artist as well as the truth, yet they must be thoughts arising out of the knowledge of truth, and feelings raising out of the contemplation of truth. We do not want his mind to be as badly blown glass, that distorts what we see through it; but like a glass of sweet and strange color, that gives new tones to what we see through it; and a glass of rare strength and clearness too, to let us see more than we could ourselves, and bring nature up to us and near to us. Nothing can atone for the want of truth, not the most brilliant imagination, the most playful fancy, the most pure feeling, (supposing that feeling *could* be pure and false at the same time;) not the most exalted conception, nor the most comprehensive grasp of intellect, can make amends for the want of truth, and that for two reasons: first, because falsehood is in itself revolting and degrading; and secondly, because nature is so immeasurably superior to all that the human mind can conceive, that every

§ 8. The exceeding importance of truth.

departure from her is a fall beneath her, so that there can be no such thing as an ornamental falsehood. All falsehood must be a blot as well as a sin, an injury as well as a deception.

§ 9. Coldness or want of beauty no sign of truth.

We shall, in consequence, find that no artist can be graceful, imaginative, or original, unless he be truthful; and that the pursuit of beauty, instead of leading us away from truth, increases the desire for it and the necessity of it tenfold; so that those artists who are really great in imaginative power, will be found to have based their boldness of conception on a mass of knowledge far exceeding that possessed by those who pride themselves on its accumulation without regarding its use. Coldness and want of passion in a picture, are not signs of the accuracy, but of the paucity, of its statements; true vigor and brilliancy are not signs of audacity, but of knowledge.

§ 10. How truth may be considered a just criterion of all art.

Hence it follows that it is in the power of all, with care and time, to form something like a just judgment of the relative merits of artists; for, although with respect to the feeling and passion of pictures, it is often as impossible to criticise as to appreciate, except to such as are in some degree equal in powers of mind, and in some respects the same in modes of mind, with those whose works they judge; yet, with respect to the representation of facts, it is possible for all, by attention, to form a right judgment of the respective powers and attainments of every artist. Truth is a bar of comparison at which they may all be examined, and according to the rank they take in this examination, will almost invariably be that which, if capable of appreciating them in every respect, we should be just in assigning them; so strict is the connection, so constant the relation between the sum of knowledge and the extent of

thought, between accuracy of perception and vividness of idea.

I shall endeavor, therefore, in the present portion of the work, to enter with care and impartiality into the investigation of the claims of the schools of ancient and modern landscape to faithfulness in representing nature. I shall pay no regard whatsoever to what may be thought beautiful, or sublime, or imaginative. I shall look only for truth; bare, clear, downright statement of facts; showing in each particular, as far as I am able, what the truth of nature is, and then seeking for the plain expression of it, and for that alone. And I shall thus endeavor, totally regardless of fervor of imagination or brilliancy of effect, or any other of their more captivating qualities, to examine and to judge the works of the great living painter, who is, I believe, imagined by the majority of the public to paint more falsehood and less fact than any other known master. We shall see with what reason.

CHAPTER II.

THAT THE TRUTH OF NATURE IS NOT TO BE DISCERNED BY THE UNEDUCATED SENSES.

It may be here inquired by the reader, with much appearance of reason, why I think it necessary to devote a separate portion of the work to the showing of what is truthful in art. "Cannot we," say the public, "see what nature is with our own eyes, and find out for ourselves what is like her?" It will be as well to determine this question before we go farther, because if this were possible, there would be little need of criticism or teaching with respect to art.

§ 1. The common self-deception of men with respect to their power of discerning truth.

Now, I have just said that it is possible for all men, by care and attention, to form a just judgment of the fidelity of artists to nature. To do this, no peculiar powers of mind are required, no sympathy with particular feelings, nothing which every man of ordinary intellect does not in some degree possess,—powers, namely, of observation and intelligence, which by cultivation may be brought to a high degree of perfection and acuteness. But until this cultivation has been bestowed, and until the instrument thereby perfected has been employed in a consistent series of careful observation, it is as absurd as it is audacious to pretend to form any judgment whatsoever respecting the truth of art: and my first business, before going a step farther, must be to combat the nearly universal error of belief among the thoughtless and unreflecting, that they know either what nature

is, or what is like her, that they can discover truth by instinct, and that their minds are such pure Venice glass as to be shocked by all treachery. I have to prove to them that there are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamed of in their philosophy, and that the truth of nature is a part of the truth of God; to him who does not search it out, darkness, as it is to him who does, infinity.

The first great mistake that people make in the matter, is the supposition that they must *see* a thing if it be before their eyes. They forget the great truth told them by Locke, Book ii., chap. 9, § 3:—"This is certain, that whatever alterations are made in the body, if they reach not the mind, whatever impressions are made on the outward parts, if they are not taken notice of within, there is no perception. Fire may burn our bodies, with no other effect than it does a billet, unless the motion be continued to the brain, and there the sense of heat or idea of pain be produced in the mind, wherein consists actual perception. How often may a man observe in himself, that while his mind is intently employed in the contemplation of some subjects and curiously surveying some ideas that are there, it takes no notice of impressions of sounding bodies, made upon the organ of hearing, with the same attention that uses to be for the producing the ideas of sound! A sufficient impulse there may be on the organ, but it not reaching the observation of the mind, there follows no perception, and though the motion that uses to produce the idea of sound be made in the ear, yet no sound is heard." And what is here said, which all must feel by their own experience to be true, is more remarkably and necessarily the case with sight than with any other of the senses, for this reason, that the ear is not accustomed to exercise constantly its functions of hearing; it is accustomed to stillness, and the

§ 2. Men usually see little of what is before their eyes.

occurrence of a sound of any kind whatsoever is apt to awake attention, and be followed with perception, in proportion to the degree of sound; but the eye, during our waking hours, exercises constantly its function of seeing; it is its constant habit; we always, as far as the *bodily* organ is concerned, see something, and we always see in the same degree, so that the occurrence of sight, as such, to the eye, is only the continuance of its necessary state of action, and awakes no attention whatsoever, except by the particular nature and quality of the sight. And thus, unless the minds of men are particularly directed to the impressions of sight, objects pass perpetually before the eyes without conveying any impression to the brain at all; and so pass actually unseen, not merely unnoticed, but in the full, clear sense of the word, unseen. And numbers of men being preoccupied with business or care of some description, totally unconnected with the impressions of sight, such is actually the case with them, they receiving from nature only the inevitable sensations of blueness, redness, darkness, light, etc., and except at particular and rare moments, no more whatsoever.

§ 3. But more or less in proportion to their natural sensibility to what is beautiful.

The degree of ignorance of external nature in which men may thus remain, depends, therefore, partly on the number and character of the subjects with which their minds may be otherwise occupied, and partly on a natural want of sensibility to the power of beauty of form, and the other attributes of external objects. I do not think that there is ever such absolute incapacity in the eye for distinguishing and receiving pleasure from certain forms and colors, as there is in persons who are technically said to have no ear, for distinguishing notes, but there is naturally every degree of bluntness and acuteness both for perceiving the truth of form, and for receiving pleasure from it when perceived. And al-

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though I believe even the lowest degree of these faculties can be expanded almost unlimitedly by cultivation, the pleasure received rewards not the labor necessary, and the pursuit is abandoned. So that while in those whose sensations are naturally acute and vivid, the call of external nature is so strong that it must be obeyed, and is ever heard louder as the approach to her is nearer, —in those whose sensations are naturally blunt, the call is overpowered at once by other thoughts, and their faculties of perception, weak originally, die of disuse.

§ 4. Connected with a perfect state of moral feeling.

With this kind of bodily sensibility to color and form is intimately connected that higher sensibility which we revere as one of the chief attributes of all noble minds, and as the chief spring of real poetry. I believe this kind of sensibility may be entirely resolved into the acuteness of bodily sense of which I have been speaking, associated with love, love I mean in its infinite and holy functions, as it embraces divine and human and brutal intelligences, and hallows the physical perception of external objects by association, gratitude, veneration, and other pure feelings of our moral nature. And although the discovery of truth is in itself altogether intellectual, and dependent merely on our powers of physical perception and abstract intellect, wholly independent of our moral nature, yet these instruments (perception and judgment) are so sharpened and brightened, and so far more swiftly and effectively used, when they have the energy and passion of our moral nature to bring them into action—perception is so quickened by love, and judgment so tempered by veneration, that, practically, a man of deadened moral sensation is always dull in his perception of truth, and thousands of the highest and most divine truths of nature are wholly concealed from him, however constant and indefatigable may be his intellectual search. Thus, then, the farther we look, the more we are limited in the

number of those to whom we should choose to appeal as judges of truth, and the more we perceive how great a number of mankind may be partially incapacitated from either discovering or feeling it.

§ 5. And of the intellectual powers.

Next to sensibility, which is necessary for the perception of facts, come reflection and memory, which are necessary for the retention of them, and recognition of their resemblances. For a man may receive impression after impression, and that vividly and with delight, and yet, if he take no care to reason upon those impressions and trace them to their sources, he may remain totally ignorant of the facts that produced them; nay, may attribute them to facts with which they have no connection, or may coin causes for them that have no existence at all. And the more sensibility and imagination a man possesses, the more likely will he be to fall into error; for then he will see whatever he expects, and admire and judge with his heart, and not with his eyes. How many people are misled, by what has been said and sung of the serenity of the Italian skies, to suppose they must be more *blue* than the skies of the north, and think that they see them so; whereas, the sky of Italy is far more dull and gray in color than the skies of the north, and is distinguished only by its intense repose of light. And this is confirmed by Benvenuto Cellini, who, I remember, on his first entering France, is especially struck with the clearness of the sky, as contrasted with the *mist* of Italy. And what is more strange still, when people see in a painting what they suppose to have been the source of their impressions, they will affirm it to be truthful, though they feel no such impression resulting from it. Thus, though day after day they may have been impressed by the tone and warmth of an Italian sky, yet not having traced the feeling to its source, and supposing themselves impressed by its *blueness*, they will affirm

a blue sky in a painting to be truthful, and reject the most faithful rendering of all the real attributes of Italy as cold or dull. And this influence of the imagination over the senses, is peculiarly observable in the perpetual disposition of mankind to suppose that they *see* what they *know*, and *vice versa* in their not seeing what they do not know. Thus, if a child be asked to draw the corner of a house, he will lay down something in the form of the letter T. He has no conception that the two lines of the roof, which he knows to be level, produce on his eye the impression of a slope. It requires repeated and close attention before he detects this fact, or can be made to feel that the lines on his paper are false. And the Chinese, children in all things, suppose a good perspective drawing to be as false as we feel their plate patterns to be, or wonder at the strange buildings which come to a point at the end. And all the early works, whether of nations or of men, show, by their want of *shade*, how little the eye, without knowledge, is to be depended upon to discover truth. The eye of a Red Indian, keen enough to find the trace of his enemy or his prey, even in the unnatural turn of a trodden leaf, is yet so blunt to the impressions of shade, that Mr. Catlin mentions his once having been in great danger from having painted a portrait with the face in half-light, which the untutored observers imagined and affirmed to be the painting of half a face. Barry, in his sixth lecture, takes notice of the same want of actual *sight* in the early painters of Italy. "The imitations," he says, "of early art are like those of children—nothing is seen in the spectacle before us, unless it be previously known and sought for; and numberless observable differences between the age of ignorance and that of knowledge, show how much the contraction or extension of our sphere of vision depends upon other considerations than the mere returns of our

§ 6. How sight depends upon previous knowledge.

natural optics." And the deception which takes place so broadly in cases like these, has infinitely greater influence over our judgment of the more intricate and less tangible truths of nature. We are constantly supposing that we see what experience only has shown us, or can show us, to have existence, constantly missing the sight of what we do not know beforehand to be visible; and painters, to the last hour of their lives, are apt to fall in some degree into the error of painting what exists, rather than what they can see. I shall prove the extent of this error more completely hereafter.

§ 7. The difficulty increased by the variety of truths in nature.

Be it also observed, that all these difficulties would lie in the way, even if the truths of nature were always the same, constantly repeated and brought before us. But the truths of nature are one eternal change — one infinite variety. There is no bush on the face of the globe exactly like another bush;—there are no two trees in the forest whose boughs bend into the same network, nor two leaves on the same tree which could not be told one from the other, nor two waves in the sea exactly alike. And out of this mass of various, yet agreeing beauty, it is by long attention only that the conception of the constant character—the ideal form—hinted at by all, yet assumed by none, is fixed upon the imagination for its standard of truth.

It is not singular, therefore, nor in any way disgraceful, that the majority of spectators are totally incapable of appreciating the truth of nature, when fully set before them; but it is both singular and disgraceful that it is so difficult to convince them of their own incapability. Ask the connoisseur, who has scampered over all Europe, the shape of the leaf of an elm, and the chances are ninety to one that he cannot tell you; and yet he will be voluble of criticism on every painted landscape from Dresden to Madrid, and pretend to tell you whether they are like

nature or not. Ask an enthusiastic chatterer in the Sistine Chapel how many ribs he has, and you get no answer; but it is odds that you do not get out of the door without his informing you that he considers such and such a figure badly drawn!

A few such interrogations as these might indeed convict, if not convince, the mass of spectators of incapability, were it not for the universal reply, that they can recognize what they cannot describe, and feel what is truthful, though they do not know what is truth. And this is, to a certain degree, true: a man may recognize the portrait of his friend, though he cannot, if you ask him apart, tell you the shape of his nose or the height of his forehead; and everyone could tell nature herself from an imitation; why not then, it will be asked, what is like her from what is not? For this simple reason, that we constantly recognize things by their least important attributes, and by help of very few of those, and if these attributes exist not in the imitation, though there may be thousands of others far higher and more valuable, yet if those be wanting, or imperfectly rendered, by which we are accustomed to recognize the object, we deny the likeness; while if these be given, though all the great and valuable and important attributes may be wanting, we affirm the likeness. Recognition is no proof of real and intrinsic resemblance. We recognize our books by their bindings, though the true and essential characteristics lie inside. A man is known to his dog by the smell—to his tailor by the coat—to his friend by the smile: each of these know him, but how little, or how much, depends on the dignity of the intelligence. That which is truly and indeed characteristic of the man, is known only to God. One portrait of a man may possess exact accuracy of feature, and no atom of expression; it may be, to use the ordinary terms of admiration bestowed

§ 8. We recognize objects by their least important attributes. Compare Part I., Sect. I., Chap. 4.

on such portraits by those whom they please, "as like as it can stare." Everybody, down to his cat, would know this. Another portrait may have neglected or misrepresented the features, but may have given the flash of the eye, and the peculiar radiance of the lip, seen on him only in his hours of highest mental excitement. None but his friends would know this. Another may have given none of his ordinary expressions, but one which he wore in the most excited instant of his life, when all his secret passions and all his highest powers were brought into play at once. None but those who had then seen him might recognize *this* as like. But which would be the most truthful portrait of the *man?* The first gives the accidents of body—the sport of climate, and food, and time—which corruption inhabits, and the worm waits for. The second gives the stamp of the soul upon the flesh; but it is the soul seen in the emotions which it shares with many—which may not be characteristic of its essence—the results of habit, and education, and accident—a gloze, whether purposely worn or unconsciously assumed, perhaps totally contrary to all that is rooted and real in the mind that it conceals. The third has caught the trace of all that was most hidden and most mighty, when all hypocrisy, and all habit, and all petty and passing emotion—the ice, and the bank, and the foam of the immortal river—were shivered, and broken, and swallowed up in the awakening of its inward strength; when the call and claim of some divine motive had brought into visible being those latent forces and feelings which the spirit's own volition could not summon, nor its consciousness comprehend; which God only knew, and God only could awaken, the depth and the mystery of its peculiar and separating attributes. And so it is with external Nature: she has a body and a soul like man; but her soul is the Deity. It is possible to represent the body without the spirit; and this shall be

like to those whose senses are only cognizant of body. It is possible to represent the spirit in its ordinary and inferior manifestations; and this shall be like to those who have not watched for its moments of power. It is possible to represent the spirit in its secret and high operations; and this shall be like only to those to whose watching they have been revealed. All these are truth; but according to the dignity of the truths he can represent or feel, is the power of the painter,—the justice of the judge.

CHAPTER III.

OF THE RELATIVE IMPORTANCE OF TRUTHS:—FIRST, THAT PARTICULAR TRUTHS ARE MORE IMPORTANT THAN GENERAL ONES.

§ 1. Necessity of determining the relative importance of truths.

I HAVE in the last chapter affirmed that we usually recognize objects by their least essential characteristics. This very naturally excites the inquiry what I consider their important characteristics, and why I call one truth more important than another. And this question must be immediately determined, because it is evident, that in judging of the truth of painters, we shall have to consider not only the accuracy with which individual truths are given, but the relative importance of the truths themselves; for as it constantly happens that the powers of art are unable to render *all* truths, that artist must be considered the most truthful who has preserved the most important at the expense of the most trifling.

§ 2. Misapplication of the aphorism: "General truths are more important than particular ones."

Now if we are to begin our investigation in Aristotle's way, and look at the *φαινόμενα* of the subject, we shall immediately stumble over a maxim which is in everybody's mouth, and which, as it is understood in practice, is true and useful, as it is usually applied in argument, false and misleading. "General truths are more important than particular ones." Often, when in conversation, I have been praising Turner for his perpetual variety, and for giving so particular and separate a character to

each of his compositions, that the mind of the painter can only be estimated by seeing all that he has ever done, and that nothing can be prophesied of a picture coming into existence on his easel, but that it will be totally different in idea from all that he has ever done before; and when I have opposed this inexhaustible knowledge or imagination, whichever it may be, to the perpetual repetition of some half-dozen conceptions by Claude and Poussin, I have been met by the formidable objection, enunciated with much dignity and self-satisfaction on the part of my antagonist—"That is not painting general truths, that is painting particular truths."/ Now there must be something wrong in that application of a principle which would make the variety and abundance which we look for as the greatest sign of intellect in the writer, the greatest sign of error in the painter; and we shall accordingly see, by an application of it to other matters, that, taken without limitation, the whole proposition is utterly false/ For instance, Mrs. Jameson somewhere mentions the exclamation of a lady of her acquaintance, more desirous to fill a pause in conversation than abundant in sources of observation: "What an excellent book the Bible is!" This was a very general truth indeed, a truth predicable of the Bible in common with many other books, but it certainly is neither striking nor important. Had the lady exclaimed—"How evidently is the Bible a divine revelation!" she would have expressed a particular truth, one predicable of the Bible only; but certainly far more interesting and important. Had she, on the contrary, informed us that the Bible was a book, she would have been still more general, and still less entertaining. If I ask anyone who somebody else is, and receive for answer that he is a man, I get little satisfaction for my pains; but if I am told that he is Sir Isaac Newton, I immediately thank my neighbor for his

§ 3. Falseness of this maxim taken without explanation.

information. The fact is, and the above instances may serve at once to prove it if it be not self-evident, that generality gives importance to the *subject*, and limitation or particularity to the *predicate*. If I say that such and such a man in China is an opium-eater, I say nothing very interesting, because my subject (such a man) is particular. If I say that all men in China are opium-eaters, I say something interesting, because my subject (all men) is general. If I say that all men in China eat, I say nothing interesting, because my predicate (eat) is general. If I say that all men in China eat opium, I say something interesting, because my predicate (eat opium) is particular.

§ 4. Generality important in the subject, particularity in the predicate.

Now almost everything which (with reference to a given subject) a painter has to ask himself whether he shall represent or not, is a predicate. Hence in art, particular truths are usually more important than general ones.

How is it then that anything so plain as this should be contradicted by one of the most universally received aphorisms respecting art? A little reflection will show us under what limitations this maxim may be true in practice.

It is self-evident that when we are painting or describing anything, those truths must be the most important which are most characteristic of what is to be told or represented. Now that which is first and most broadly characteristic of a thing, is that which distinguishes its genus, or which makes it what it is. For instance, that which makes drapery *be* drapery, is not its being made of silk or worsted or flax, for things are made of all these which are not drapery, but the ideas peculiar to drapery; the properties which, when inherent in a thing, make it drapery, are extension, non-elastic flexi-

§ 5. The importance of truths of species is not owing to their generality.

bility, unity, and comparative thinness. Everything which has these properties, a waterfall, for instance, if united and extended, or a net of weeds over a wall, is drapery, as much as silk or woollen stuff is. So that these ideas separate drapery in our minds from everything else; they are peculiarly characteristic of it, and therefore are the most important group of ideas connected with it; and so with everything else, that which makes the thing what it is, is the most important idea, or group of ideas connected with the thing. But as this idea must necessarily be common to all individuals of the species it belongs to, it is a general idea with repect to that species; while other ideas, which are not characteristic of the species, and are therefore in reality general, as black or white are terms applicable to more things than drapery,) are yet particular with respect to that species, being predicable only of certain individuals of it. Hence it is carelessly and falsely said, that general ideas are more important than particular ones; carelessly and falsely, I say, because the so-called general idea is important, not because it is common to all the individuals of that species, but because it separates that species from everything else. It is the distinctiveness, not the universality of the truth, which renders it important. And the so-called particular idea is unimportant, not because it is not predicable of the whole species, but because it *is* predicable of things out of that species. It is not its individuality, but its generality which renders it unimportant. So, then, truths are important just in proportion as they are characteristic, and are valuable, primarily, as they separate the species from all other created things; secondarily, as they separate the individuals of that species from one another: thus "silken" or "woollen" are unimportant ideas with respect to drapery, because they neither separate the species from other

§ 6. All truths valuable as they are characteristic.

things, nor even the individuals of that species from one another, since, though not common to the whole of it, they are common to indefinite numbers of it; but the particular folds into which any piece of drapery may happen to fall, being different in many particulars from those into which any other piece of drapery will fall, are expressive not only of the characters of the species, flexibility (non-elasticity, etc.,) but of individuality and definite character in the case immediately observed, and are consequently most important and necessary ideas. So in a man, to be short-legged or long-nosed, or anything else of accidental quality, does not distinguish him from other short-legged or long-nosed animals; but the important truths respecting a man are, first, the marked development of that distinctive organization which separates him as man from other animals, and secondly, that group of qualities which distinguish the individual from all other men, which make him Paul or Judas, Newton or Shakspeare.

Such are the real sources of importance in truths as far as they are considered with reference merely to their being general, or particular; but there are other sources of importance which give farther weight to the ordinary opinion of the greater value of those which are general, and which render this opinion right in practice; I mean the intrinsic beauty of the truths themselves, a quality which it is not here the place to investigate, but which must just be noticed, as invariably adding value to truths of species rather than to those of individuality. The qualities and properties which characterize man or any other animal as a species, are the perfection of his or its form of mind, almost all individual differences arising from imperfections; hence a truth of species is the more valuable to art, because it must always be a beauty, while a truth of individuals is commonly, in some sort or way, a defect.

§ 7. Otherwise truths of species are valuable, because beautiful.

Again, a truth which may be of great interest, when an object is viewed by itself, may be objectionable when it is viewed in relation to other objects. Thus if we were painting a piece of drapery as our whole subject, it would be proper to give in it every source of entertainment, which particular truths could supply, to give it varied color and delicate texture; but if we paint this same piece of drapery, as part of the dress of a Madonna, all these ideas of richness or texture become thoroughly contemptible, and unfit to occupy the mind at the same moment with the idea of the Virgin. The conception of drapery is then to be suggested by the simplest and slightest means possible, and all notions of texture and detail are to be rejected with utter reprobation; but this, observe, is not because they are particular or general or anything else, with respect to the drapery itself, but because they draw the attention to the dress instead of the saint, and disturb and degrade the imagination and the feelings; hence we ought to give the conception of the drapery in the most unobtrusive way possible, by rendering those essential qualities distinctly, which are necessary to the very existence of drapery, and not one more.

§ 8. And many truths, valuable if separate, may be objectionable in connection with others.

With these last two sources of the importance of truths, we have nothing to do at present, as they are dependent upon ideas of beauty and relation: I merely allude to them now, to show that all that is alleged by Sir J. Reynolds and other scientific writers respecting the kind of truths proper to be represented by the painter or sculptor is perfectly just and right; while yet the principle on which they base their selection (that general truths are more important than particular ones) is altogether false. Canova's Perseus in the Vatican is entirely spoiled by an unlucky *tassel* in the folds of the mantle (which the next admirer of Canova who passes would do

well to knock off;) but it is spoiled not because this is a particular truth, but because it is a contemptible, unnecessary, and ugly truth. The button which fastens the vest of the Sistine Daniel is as much a particular truth as this, but it is a necessary one, and the idea of it is given by the simplest possible means; hence it is right and beautiful.

§ 9. Recapitulation.

Finally, then, it is to be remembered that all truths as far as their being particular or general affects their value at all, are valuable in proportion as they are particular, and valueless in proportion as they are general; or to express the proposition in simpler terms, every truth is valuable in proportion as it is characteristic of the thing of which it is affirmed.

CHAPTER IV.

OF THE RELATIVE IMPORTANCE OF TRUTHS:—SECONDLY, THAT RARE TRUTHS ARE MORE IMPORTANT THAN FREQUENT ONES.

It will be necessary next for us to determine how far frequency or rarity can affect the importance of truths, and whether the artist is to be considered the most truthful who paints what is common or what is unusual in nature.

§ 1. No accidental violation of nature's principles should be represented.

Now the whole determination of this question depends upon whether the unusual fact be a violation of nature's general principles, or the application of some of those principles in a peculiar and striking way. Nature sometimes, though very rarely, violates her own principles; it is her principle to make everything beautiful, but now and then, for an instant, she permits what, compared with the rest of her works, might be called ugly; it is true that even these rare blemishes are permitted, as I have above said, for a good purpose, (Part I. Sec. I. Chap. 5,) they are valuable in nature, and used as she uses them, are equally valuable (as instantaneous discords) in art; but the artist who should seek after these exclusively, and paint nothing else, though he might be able to point to something in nature as the original of every one of his uglinesses, would yet be, in the strict sense of the word, false,—false to nature, and disobedient to her laws. For instance, it is the practice of nature to give character to the outlines of her clouds, by perpetual angles and right lines. Perhaps once in a month, by diligent watching,

we might be able to see a cloud altogether rounded and made up of curves; but the artist who paints nothing but curved clouds must yet be considered thoroughly and inexcusably false.

But the case is widely different, when instead of a principle violated, we have one extraordinarily carried out or manifested under unusual circumstances. Though nature is constantly beautiful, she does not exhibit her highest powers of beauty constantly, for then they would satiate us and pall upon our senses. It is necessary to their appreciation that they should be rarely shown. Her finest touches are things which must be watched for; her most perfect passages of beauty are the most evanescent. She is constantly doing something beautiful for us, but it is something which she has not done before and will not do again; some exhibition of her general powers in particular circumstances which, if we do not catch at the instant it is passing, will not be repeated for us. Now they are these evanescent passages of perfected beauty, these perpetually varied examples of utmost power, which the artist ought to seek for and arrest. No supposition can be more absurd than that effects or truths frequently exhibited are more characteristic of nature than those which are equally necessary by her laws, though rarer in occurrence. Both the frequent and the rare are parts of the same great system; to give either exclusively is imperfect truth, and to repeat the same effect or thought in two pictures is wasted life. What should we think of a poet who should keep all his life repeating the same thought in different words? and why should we be more lenient to the parrot-painter who has learned one lesson from the page of nature, and keeps stammering it out with eternal repetition without turning the leaf?

§ 2. But the cases in which those principles have been strikingly exemplified.

§ 3. Which are comparatively rare.

§ 4. All repetition is blamable.

Is it less tautology to describe a thing over and over again with lines, than it is with words? The teaching of nature is as varied and infinite as it is constant; and the duty of the painter is to watch for every one of her lessons, and to give (for human life will admit of nothing more) those in which she has manifested each of her principles in the most peculiar and striking way. The deeper his research and the rarer the phenomena he has noted, the more valuable will his works be; to repeat himself, even in a single instance, is treachery to nature, for a thousand human lives would not be enough to give one instance of the perfect manifestation of each of her powers; and as for combining or classifying them, as well might a preacher expect in one sermon to express and explain every divine truth which can be gathered out of God's revelation, as a painter expect in one composition to express and illustrate every lesson which can be received from God's creation. Both are commentators on infinity, and the duty of both is to take for each discourse one essential truth, seeking particularly and insisting especially on those which are less palpable to ordinary observation, and more likely to escape an indolent research, and to impress that, and that alone, upon those whom they address, with every illustration that can be furnished by their knowledge, and every adornment attainable by their power. And the real truthfulness of the painter is in proportion to the number and variety of the facts he has so illustrated; those facts being always, as above observed, the realization, not the violation of a general principle. The quantity of truth is in proportion to the number of such facts, and its value and instructiveness in proportion to their rarity. All really great pictures, therefore, exhibit the general habits of nature, manifested in some peculiar, rare, and beautiful way.

§ 5. The duty of the painter is the same as that of a preacher.

CHAPTER V.

OF THE RELATIVE IMPORTANCE OF TRUTHS:—THIRDLY, THAT TRUTHS OF COLOR ARE THE LEAST IMPORTANT OF ALL TRUTHS.

§ 1. Difference between primary and secondary qualities in bodies.

In the two last chapters, we have pointed out general tests of the importance of all truths, which will be sufficient at once to distinguish certain classes of properties in bodies, as more necessary to be told than others, because more characteristic, either of the particular thing to be represented, or of the principles of nature.

According to Locke, Book ii. chap. 8, there are three sorts of qualities in bodies: first, the "bulk, figure, number, situation, and motion or rest of their solid parts: those that are in them, whether we perceive them or not." These he calls primary qualities. Secondly, "the power that is in any body to operate after a peculiar manner on any of our senses," (sensible qualities.) And thirdly, "the power that is in any body to make such a change in another body as that it shall operate on our senses differently from what it did before: these last being usually called *powers*."

§ 2. The first are fully characteristic, the second imperfectly so.

Hence he proceeds to prove that those which he calls primary qualities are indeed part of the essence of the body, and characteristic of it; but that the two other kinds of qualities which together he calls secondary, are neither of them more than *powers* of producing on other objects, or in us, certain effects and sensations. Now a power of influence is always equally characteristic of two objects—the

active and passive; for it is as much necessary that there should be a power in the object suffering to receive the impression, as in the object acting to give the impression. (Compare Locke, Book ii. chap. 21, sect. 2.) For supposing two people, as is frequently the case, perceive different scents in the same flower, it is evident that the power in the flower to give this or that depends on the nature of their nerves, as well as on that of its own particles; and that we are as correct in saying it is a power in us to perceive, as in the object to impress. Every power, therefore, being characteristic of the nature of two bodies, is imperfectly and incompletely characteristic of either separately; but the primary qualities, being characteristic only of the body in which they are inherent, are the most important truths connected with it. For the question, what the thing *is*, must precede, and be of more importance than the question, what can it do.

§ 3. Color is a secondary quality, therefore less important than form.

Now, by Locke's definition above given, only bulk, figure, situation, and motion or rest of solid parts, are primary qualities. Hence all truths of color sink at once into the second rank. He, therefore, who has neglected a truth of form for a truth of color, has neglected a greater truth for a less one.

And that color is indeed a most unimportant characteristic of objects, will be farther evident on the slightest consideration. The color of plants is constantly changing with the season, and of everything with the quality of light falling on it; but the nature and essence of the thing are independent of these changes. An oak is an oak, whether green with spring or red with winter; a dahlia is a dahlia, whether it be yellow or crimson; and if some monster-hunting botanist should ever frighten the flower blue, still it will be a dahlia; but let one curve of the petals—one groove of the stamens be wanting, and

the flower ceases to be the same. Let the roughness of the bark and the angles of the boughs be smoothed or diminished, and the oak ceases to be an oak; but let it retain its inward structure and outward form, and though its leaves grew white, or pink, or blue, or tri-color, it would be a white oak, or a pink oak, or a republican oak, but an oak still. Again, color is hardly ever even a *possible* distinction between two objects of the same species. Two trees, of the same kind, at the same season, and of the same age, are of absolutely the same color; but they are not of the same form, nor anything like it. There can be no difference in the color of two pieces of rock broken from the same place; but it is impossible they should be of the same form. So that form is not only the chief characteristic of species, but the only characteristic of individuals of a species.

§ 4. Color no distinction between objects of the same species.

Again, a color, in association with other colors, is different from the same color seen by itself. It has a distinct and peculiar power upon the retina dependent on its association. Consequently, the color of any object is not more dependent upon the nature of the object itself, and the eye beholding it, than on the color of the objects near it; in this respect also, therefore, it is no characteristic.

§ 5. And different in association from what it is alone.

And so great is the uncertainty with respect to those qualities or powers which depend as much on the nature of the object suffering as of the object acting, that it is totally impossible to prove that one man sees in the same thing the same color that another does though he may use the same name for it. One man may see yellow where another sees blue, but as the effect is constant, they agree in the term to be used for it, and both call it blue, or both yellow, having yet totally different ideas at-

§ 6. It is not certain whether any two people see the same colors in things.

tached to the term. And yet neither can be said to see falsely, because the color is not in the thing, but in the thing and them together. But if they see forms differently, one must see falsely, because the form is positive in the object. My friend may see boars blue for anything I know, but it is impossible he should see them with paws instead of hoofs, unless his eyes or brain are diseased. (Compare Locke, Book ii. chap. xxxii. § 15.) But I do not speak of this uncertainty as capable of having any effect on art, because, though perhaps Landseer sees dogs of the color which I should call blue, yet the color he puts on the canvas, being in the same way blue to him, will still be brown or dog-color to me; and so we may argue on points of color just as if all men saw alike, as indeed in all probability they do; but I merely mention this uncertainty to show farther the vagueness and unimportance of color as a characteristic of bodies.

§ 7. Form, considered as an element of landscape, includes light and shade.

Before going farther, however, I must explain the sense in which I have used the word "form," because painters have a most inaccurate and careless habit of confining the term to the *outline* of bodies, whereas it necessarily implies light and shade. It is true that the outline and the chiaroscuro must be separate subjects of investigation with the student; but no form whatsoever can be known to the eye in the slightest degree without its chiaroscuro; and, therefore, in speaking of form generally as an element of landscape, I mean that perfect and harmonious unity of outline with light and shade, by which all the parts and projections and proportions of a body are fully explained to the eye, being nevertheless perfectly independent of sight or power in other objects, the presence of light upon a body being a positive existence, whether we are aware of it or not, and in no degree dependent upon our senses. This being under-

stood, the most convincing proof of the unimportance of color lies in the accurate observation of the way in which any material object impresses itself on the mind. If we look at nature carefully, we shall find that her colors are in a state of perpetual confusion and indistinctness, while her forms, as told by light and shade, are invariably clear, distinct, and speaking. The stones and gravel of the bank catch green reflections from the boughs above; the bushes receive grays and yellows from the ground; every hairbreadth of polished surface gives a little bit of the blue of the sky or the gold of the sun, like a star upon the local color; this local color, changeful and uncertain in itself, is again disguised and modified by the hue of the light, or quenched in the gray of the shadow; and the confusion and blending of tint is altogether so great, that were we left to find out what objects were by their colors only, we would scarcely in places distinguish the boughs of a tree from the air beyond them, or the ground beneath them. I know that people unpractised in art will not believe this at first; but if they have accurate powers of observation, they may soon ascertain it for themselves; they will find that, while they can scarcely ever determine the *exact* hue of anything, except when it occurs in large masses, as in a green field or the blue sky, the form, as told by light and shade, is always decided and evident, and the source of the chief character of every object. Light and shade indeed so completely conquer the distinctions of local color, that the difference in hue between the illumined parts of a white and black object is not so great as the difference (in sunshine) between the illumined and dark side of either separately.

§ 8. Importance of light and shade in expressing the character of bodies and unimportance of color.

We shall see hereafter, in considering ideas of beauty, that color, even as a source of pleasure, is feeble com-

pared to form; but this we cannot insist upon at present; we have only to do with simple truth, and the observations we have made are sufficient to prove that the artist who sacrifices or forgets a truth of form in the pursuit of a truth of color, sacrifices what is definite to what is uncertain, and what is essential to what is accidental.

§ 9. Recapitulation.

CHAPTER VI.

RECAPITULATION.

§ 1. The importance of historical truths.

It ought farther to be observed respecting truths in general, that those are always most valuable which are most historical, that is, which tell us most about the past and future states of the object to which they belong. In a tree, for instance, it is more important to give the appearance of energy and elasticity in the limbs which is indicative of growth and life, than any particular character of leaf, or texture of bough. It is more important that we should feel that the uppermost sprays are creeping higher and higher into the sky, and be impressed with the current of life and motion which is animating every fibre, than that we should know the exact pitch of relief with which those fibres are thrown out against the sky. For the first truths tell us tales about the tree, about what it has been, and will be, while the last are characteristic of it only in its present state, and are in no way talkative about themselves. Talkative facts are always more interesting and more important than silent ones. So again the lines in a crag which mark its stratification, and how it has been washed and rounded by water, or twisted and drawn out in fire, are more important, because they tell more than the stains of the lichens which change year by year, and the accidental fissures of frost or decomposition; not but that both of these are historical, but historical in a less distinct manner, and for shorter periods.

Hence in general the truths of specific form are the first and most important of all; and next to them,

those truths of chiaroscuro which are necessary to make us understand every quality and part of forms, and the relative distances of objects among each other, and in consequence their relative bulks. Altogether lower than these, as truths, though often most important as beauties, stand all effects of chiaroscuro which are productive merely of imitations of light and tone, and all effects of color. To make us understand the *space* of the sky, is an end worthy of the artist's highest powers; to hit its particular blue or gold is an end to be thought of when we have accomplished the first, and not till then.

§ 2. Form, as explained by light and shade, the first of all truths. Tone, light and color are secondary.

Finally, far below all these come those particular accuracies or tricks of chiaroscuro which cause objects to look projecting from the canvas, not worthy of the name of truths, because they require for their attainment the sacrifice of all others; for not having at our disposal the same intensity of light by which nature illustrates her objects, we are obliged, if we would have perfect deception in one, to destroy its relation to the rest. (Compare Sect. II. chap. V.) And thus he who throws one object out of his picture, never lets the spectator into it. Michael Angelo bids you follow his phantoms into the abyss of heaven, but a modern French painter drops his hero out of the picture frame.

§ 3. And deceptive chiaroscuro the lowest of all.

This solidity or projection then, is the very lowest truth that art can give; it is the painting of mere matter, giving that as food for the eye which is properly only the subject of touch; it can neither instruct nor exalt, nor please except as jugglery; it addresses no sense of beauty nor of power; and wherever it characterizes the general aim of a picture, it is the sign and the evidence of the vilest and lowest mechanism which art can be insulted by giving name to.

CHAPTER VII.

GENERAL APPLICATION OF THE FOREGOING PRINCIPLES.

§ 1. The different selection of facts consequent on the several aims at imitation or at truth.

We have seen, in the preceding chapters, some proof of what was before asserted, that the truths necessary for deceptive imitation are not only few, but of the very lowest order. We thus find painters ranging themselves into two great classes; one aiming at the development of the exquisite truths of specific form, refined color, and ethereal space, and content with the clear and impressive suggestion of any of these, by whatsoever means obtained; and the other casting all these aside, to attain those particular truths of tone and chiaroscuro, which may trick the spectator into a belief of reality. The first class, if they have to paint a tree, are intent upon giving the exquisite designs of intersecting undulation in its boughs, the grace of its leafage, the intricacy of its organization, and all those qualities which make it lovely or affecting of its kind. The second endeavor only to make you believe that you are looking at wood. They are totally regardless of truths or beauties of form; a stump is as good as a trunk for all their purposes, so that they can only deceive the eye into the supposition that it *is* a stump and not canvas.

§ 2. The old masters, as a body, aim only at imitation.

To which of these classes the great body of the old landscape painters belonged, may be partly gathered from the kind of praise which is bestowed upon them by those who admire them most, which either refers to technical mat-

ters, dexterity of touch, clever oppositions of color, etc., or is bestowed on the power of the painter to *deceive*. M. de Marmontel, going into a connoisseur's gallery, pretends to mistake a fine Berghem for a window. This, he says, was affirmed by its possessor to be the greatest praise the picture had ever received. Such is indeed the notion of art which is at the bottom of the veneration usually felt for the old landscape painters; it is of course the palpable, first idea of ignorance; it is the only notion which people unacquainted with art can by any possibility have of its ends; the only test by which people unacquainted with nature can pretend to form anything like judgment of art. It is strange that, with the great historical painters of Italy before them, who had broken so boldly and indignantly from the trammels of this notion, and shaken the very dust of it from their feet, the succeeding landscape painters should have wasted their lives in jugglery: but so it is, and so it will be felt, the more we look into their works, that the deception of the senses was the great and first end of all their art. To attain this they paid deep and serious attention to effects of light and tone, and to the exact degree of relief which material objects take against light and atmosphere; and sacrificing every other truth to these, not necessarily, but because they required no others for deception, they succeeded in rendering these particular facts with a fidelity and force which, in the pictures that have come down to us uninjured, are as yet unequalled, and never can be surpassed. They painted their foregrounds with laborious industry, covering them with details so as to render them deceptive to the ordinary eye, regardless of beauty or truth in the details themselves; they painted their trees with careful attention to their pitch of shade against the sky, utterly regardless of all that is beautiful or essential in the anatomy of their foliage and

§ 3. What truths they gave.

boughs: they painted their distances with exquisite use of transparent color and aerial tone, totally neglectful of all facts and forms which nature uses such color and tone to relieve and adorn. They had neither love of nature, nor feeling of her beauty; they looked for her coldest and most commonplace effects, because they were easiest to imitate; and for her most vulgar forms, because they were most easily to be recognized by the untaught eyes of those whom alone they could hope to please; they did it, like the Pharisee of old, to be seen of men, and they had their reward. They do deceive and delight the unpractised eye; they will to all ages, as long as their colors endure, be the standards of excellence with all, who, ignorant of nature, claim to be thought learned in art. And they will to all ages be, to those who have thorough love and knowledge of the creation which they libel, instructive proofs of the limited number and low character of the truths which are necessary, and the accumulated multitude of pure, broad, bold falsehoods which are admissible in pictures meant only to deceive.

There is of course more or less accuracy of knowledge and execution combined with this aim at effect, according to the industry and precision of eye possessed by the master, and more or less of beauty in the forms selected, according to his natural taste; but both the beauty and truth are sacrificed unhesitatingly where they interfere with the great effort at deception. Claude had, if it had been cultivated, a fine feeling for beauty of form, and is seldom ungraceful in his foliage; but his picture, when examined with reference to essential truth, is one mass of error from beginning to end. Cuyp, on the other hand, could paint close truth of everything, except ground and water, with decision and success, but he has no sense of beauty. Gaspar Poussin, more ignorant of truth than Claude, and almost as dead

to beauty as Cuyp, has yet a perception of the feeling and moral truth of nature which often redeems the picture; but yet in all of them, everything that they can do is done for deception, and nothing for the sake or love of what they are painting.

§ 4. The principles of selection adopted by modern artists.

Modern landscape painters have looked at nature with totally different eyes, seeking not for what is easiest to imitate, but for what is most important to tell. Rejecting at once all ideal of *bona fide* imitation, they think only of conveying the impression of nature into the mind of the spectator. And there is, in consequence, a greater sum of valuable, essential, and impressive truth in the works of two or three of our leading modern landscape painters, than in those of all the old masters put together, and of truth too, nearly unmixed with definite or avoidable falsehood; while the unimportant and feeble truths of the old masters are choked with a mass of perpetual defiance of the most authoritative laws of nature.

I do not expect this assertion to be believed at present; it must rest for demonstration on the examination we are about to enter upon; yet, even without reference to any intricate or deep-laid truths, it appears strange to me, that anyone familiar with nature, and fond of her, should not grow weary and sick at heart among the melancholy and monotonous transcripts of her which alone can be received from the old school of art. A man accustomed to the broad, wild sea-shore, with its bright breakers, and free winds, and sounding rocks, and eternal sensation of tameless power, can scarcely but be angered when Claude bids him stand still on some paltry, chipped and chiselled quay with porters and wheelbarrows running against him, to watch a weak, rippling bound and barriered water, that has not strength enough in one of its waves to upset the flower-

§ 5. General feeling of Claude, Salvator, and G. Poussin, contrasted with the freedom and vastness of nature.

pots on the wall, or even to fling one jet of spray over the confining stone. A man accustomed to the strength and glory of God's mountains, with their soaring and radiant pinnacles, and surging sweeps of measureless distance, kingdoms in their valleys, and climates upon their crests, can scarcely but be angered when Salvator bids him stand still under some contemptible fragment of splintery crag, which an Alpine snow-wreath would smother in its first swell, with a stunted bush or two growing out of it, and a volume of manufactory smoke for a sky. A man accustomed to the grace and infinity of nature's foliage, with every vista a cathedral, and every bough a revelation, can scarcely but be angered when Poussin mocks him with a black round mass of impenetrable paint, diverging into feathers instead of leaves, and supported on a stick instead of a trunk. The fact is, there is one thing wanting in all the doing of these men, and that is the very virtue by which the work of human mind chiefly rises above that of the Daguerreotype or Calotype, or any other mechanical means that ever have been or may be invented, Love: There is no evidence of their ever having gone to nature with any thirst, or received from her such emotion as could make them, even for an instant, lose sight of themselves; there is in them neither earnestness nor humility; there is no simple or honest record of any single truth; none of the plain words nor straight efforts that men speak and make when they once feel.

§ 6. Inadequacy of the landscape of Titian and Tintoret.

Nor is it only by the professed landscape painters that the great verities of the material world are betrayed: Grand as are the motives of landscape in the works of the earlier and mightier men, there is yet in them nothing approaching to a general view nor complete rendering of natural phenomena; not that they are to be blamed for this, for they took out of nature that which was fit for their

purpose, and their mission was to do no more; but we must be cautious to distinguish that imaginative abstraction of landscape which alone we find in them, from the entire statement of truth which has been attempted by the moderns. I have said in the chapter on symmetry in the second volume, that all landscape grandeur vanishes before that of Titian and Tintoret; and this is true of whatever these two giants touched;—but they touched little. A few level flakes of chestnut foliage; a blue abstraction of hill forms from Cadore or the Euganeans; a grand mass or two of glowing ground and mighty herbage, and a few burning fields of quiet cloud were all they needed; there is evidence of Tintoret's having felt more than this, but it occurs only in secondary fragments of rock, cloud, or pine, hardly noticed among the accumulated interest of his human subject. From the window of Titian's house at Venice, the chain of the Tyrolese Alps is seen lifted in spectral power above the tufted plain of Treviso; every dawn that reddens the towers of Murano lights also a line of pyramidal fires along that colossal ridge; but there is, so far as I know, no evidence in any of the master's works of his ever having beheld, much less felt, the majesty of their burning. The dark firmament and saddened twilight of Tintoret are sufficient for their end; but the sun never plunges behind San Giorgio in Aliga without such retinue of radiant cloud, such rest of zoned light on the green lagoon, as never received image from his hand. More than this, of that which they loved and rendered much is rendered conventionally; by noble conventionalities indeed, but such nevertheless as would be inexcusable if the landscape became the principal subject instead of an accompaniment. I will instance only the San Pietro Martire, which, if not the most perfect, is at least the most popular of Titian's landscapes; in which, to obtain light on the flesh of the near figures the sky is made as

dark as deep sea, the mountains are laid in with violent and impossible blue, except one of them on the left, which, to connect the distant light with the foreground, is thrown into light relief, unexplained by its materials, unlikely in its position, and in its degree impossible under any circumstances.

§ 7. Causes of its want of influence on subsequent schools.

I do not instance these as faults in the picture: there are no works of very powerful color which are free from conventionality concentrated or diffused, daring or disguised; but as the conventionality of this whole picture is mainly thrown into the landscape, it is necessary, while we acknowledge the virtue of this distance as a part of the great composition, to be on our guard against the license it assumes and the attractiveness of its overcharged color. Fragments of far purer truth occur in the works of Tintoret; and in the drawing of foliage, whether rapid or elaborate, of masses or details, the Venetian painters, taken as a body, may be considered almost faultless models. But the whole field of what they have done is so narrow, and therein is so much of what is only relatively right, and in itself false or imperfect, that the young and inexperienced painter could run no greater risk than the too early taking them for teachers; and to the general spectator their landscape is valuable rather as a means of peculiar and solemn emotion than as ministering to, or inspiring the universal love of nature. Hence while men of serious mind, especially those whose pursuits have brought them into continued relations with the peopled rather than the lonely world, will always look to the Venetian painters as having touched those simple chords of landscape harmony which are most in unison with earnest and melancholy feeling; those whose philosophy is more cheerful and more extended, as having been trained and colored among simple and solitary nature, will seek for a wider and more

systematic circle of teaching: they may grant that the barred horizontal gloom of the Titian sky, and the massy leaves of the Titian forest are among the most sublime of the conceivable forms of material things; but they know that the virtue of these very forms is to be learned only by right comparison of them with the cheerfulness, fulness and comparative inquietness of other hours and scenes; that they are not intended for the continual food, but the occasional soothing of the human heart; that there is a lesson of not less value in its place, though of less concluding and sealing authority, in every one of the more humble phases of material things: and that there are some lessons of equal or greater authority which these masters neither taught nor received. And until the school of modern landscape arose Art had never noted the links of this mighty chain; it mattered not that a fragment lay here and there, no heavenly lightning could descend by it; the landscape of the Venetians was without effect on any contemporary in subsequent schools; it still remains on the continent as useless as if it had never existed; and at this moment German and Italian landscapes, of which no words are scornful enough to befit the utter degradation, hang in the Venetian Academy in the next room to the Desert of Titian and the Paradise of Tintoret.*

§ 8. The value of inferior works of art how to be estimated.

That then which I would have the reader inquire respecting every work of art of undetermined merit submitted to his judgment, is not whether it be a work of especial grandeur, importance, or power; but whether it have *any*

* Not the large Paradise, but the Fall of Adam, a small picture chiefly in brown and gray, near Titian's Assumption. Its companion, the Death of Abel, is remarkable as containing a group of trees which Turner, I believe accidentally, has repeated nearly mass for mass in the "Marly." Both are among the most noble works of this or any other master, whether for preciousness of color or energy of thought.

virtue or substance as a link in this chain of truth, whether it have recorded or interpreted anything before unknown, whether it have added one single stone to our heaven-pointing pyramid, cut away one dark bough, or levelled one rugged hillock in our path. This, if it be an honest work of art, it must have done, for no man ever yet worked honestly without giving some such help to his race. God appoints to every one of his creatures a separate mission, and if they discharge it honorably, if they quit themselves like men and faithfully follow that light which is in them, withdrawing from it all cold and quenching influence, there will assuredly come of it such burning as, in its appointed mode and measure, shall shine before men, and be of service constant and holy. Degrees infinite of lustre there must always be, but the weakest among us has a gift, however seemingly trivial, which is peculiar to him, and which worthily used will be a gift also to his race forever—

"Fool not," says George Herbert,

> "For all may have,
> If they dare choose, a glorious life or grave."

If, on the contrary, there be nothing of this freshness achieved, if there be neither purpose nor fidelity in what is done, if it be an envious or powerless imitation of other men's labors, if it be a display of mere manual dexterity or curious manufacture, or if in any other mode it show itself as having its origin in vanity,—Cast it out. It matters not what powers of mind may have been concerned or corrupted in it, all have lost their savor, it is worse than worthless;—perilous—Cast it out.

Works of art are indeed always of mixed kind, their honesty being more or less corrupted by the various weaknesses of the painter, by his vanity, his idleness, or his cowardice; (the fear of doing right has far more in-

fluence on art than is commonly thought,) that only is altogether to be rejected which is altogether vain, idle, and cowardly. Of the rest the rank is to be estimated rather by the purity of their metal than the coined value of it.

Keeping these principles in view, let us endeavor to obtain something like a general view of the assistance which has been rendered to our study of nature by the various occurrences of landscape in elder art, and by the more exclusively directed labors of modern schools.

§ 9. Religious landscape of Italy. The admirableness of its completion.

To the ideal landscape of the early religious painters of Italy I have alluded in the concluding chapter of the second volume. It is absolutely right and beautiful in its peculiar application; but its grasp of nature is narrow and its treatment in most respects too severe and conventional to form a profitable example when the landscape is to be alone the subject of thought. The great virtue of it is its entire, exquisite, and humble realization of those objects it selects; in this respect differing from such German imitations of it as I have met with, that there is no effort of any fanciful or ornamental modifications, but loving fidelity to the thing studied. The foreground plants are usually neither exaggerated nor stiffened; they do not form arches or frames or borders; their grace is unconfined, their simplicity undestroyed. Cima da Conegliano, in his picture in the church of the Madonna dell' Orto at Venice, has given us the oak, the fig, the beautiful "Erba della Madonna" on the wall, precisely such a bunch of it as may be seen growing at this day on the marble steps of that very church; ivy and other creepers, and a strawberry plant in the foreground, with a blossom and a berry just set, and one half ripe and one ripe, all patiently and innocently painted from the real thing, and therefore most divine. Fra Angelico's use of the oxalis acetosella is as faithful in

representation as touching in feeling.* The ferns that grow on the walls of Fiesole may be seen in their simple verity on the architecture of Ghirlandajo. The rose, the myrtle, and the lily, the olive and orange, pomegranate and vine, have received their fairest portraiture where they bear a sacred character; even the common plantains and mallows of the waysides are touched with deep reverence by Raffaelle; and indeed for the perfect treatment of details of this kind, treatment as delicate and affectionate as it is elevated and manly, it is to the works of these schools alone that we can refer. And on this their peculiar excellence I should the more earnestly insist, because it is of a kind altogether neglected by the English school, and with most unfortunate result, many of our best painters missing their deserved rank solely from the want of it, as Gainsborough; and all being more or less checked in their progress or vulgarized in their aim.

§ 10. Finish, and the want of it. how right and how wrong.

It is a misfortune for all honest critics, that hardly any quality of art is independently to be praised, and without reference to the motive from which it resulted, and the place in which it appears; so that no principle can be simply enforced but it shall seem to countenance a vice; while the work of qualification and explanation both weakens the force of what is said, and is not perhaps always likely to be with patience received: so also those who desire to misunderstand or to oppose have it always in their power to become obtuse listeners or specious opponents. Thus I hardly dare insist upon the virtue of completion, lest I should be supposed a defender of Wouvermans or Gerard Dow; neither can I adequately praise the power

* The triple leaf of this plant, and white flower, stained purple, probably gave it strange typical interest among the Christian painters. Angelico, in using its leaves mixed with daisies in the foreground of his Crucifixion had, I imagine, a view also to its chemical property.

of Tintoret, without fearing to be thought adverse to Holbein or Perugino. The fact is, that both finish and impetuosity, specific minuteness, or large abstraction, may be the signs of passion, or of its reverse; may result from affection or indifference, intellect or dulness. Some men finish from intense love of the beautiful in the smallest parts of what they do; others in pure incapability of comprehending anything but parts; others to show their dexterity with the brush, and prove expenditure of time. Some are impetuous and bold in their handling, from having great thoughts to express which are independent of detail; others because they have bad taste or have been badly taught; others from vanity, and others from indolence. (Compare Vol. II. Chap. IX. § 8.) Now both the finish and incompletion are right where they are the signs of passion or of thought, and both are wrong, and I think the finish the more contemptible of the two, when they cease to be so. The modern Italians will paint every leaf of a laurel or rose-bush without the slightest feeling of their beauty or character; and without showing one spark of intellect or affection from beginning to end. Anything is better than this; and yet the very highest schools *do* the same thing, or nearly so, but with totally different motives and perceptions, and the result is divine. On the whole, I conceive that the extremes of good and evil lie with the finishers, and that whatever glorious power we may admit in men like Tintoret, whatever attractiveness of method to Rubens, Rembrandt, or, though in far less degree, our own Reynolds, still the thoroughly great men are those who have done everything thoroughly, and who, in a word, have never despised anything, however small, of God's making. And this is the chief fault of our English landscapists, that they have not the intense all-observing penetration of well-balanced mind; they have not, except in one or two instances, anything of

that feeling which Wordsworth shows in the following lines:—

> "So fair, so sweet, withal so sensitive;—
> Would that the little flowers were born to live
> Conscious of half the pleasure which they give.
> That to this mountain daisy's self were known
> *The beauty of its star-shaped shadow, thrown*
> *On the smooth surface of this naked stone.*"

That is a little bit of good, downright, foreground painting—no mistake about it; daisy, and shadow, and stone texture and all. Our painters must come to this before they have done their duty; and yet, on the other hand, let them beware of finishing, for the sake of finish, all over their picture. The ground is not to be all over daisies, nor is every daisy to have its star-shaped shadow; there is as much finish in the right concealment of things as in the right exhibition of them; and while I demand this amount of specific character where nature shows it, I demand equal fidelity to her where she conceals it. To paint mist rightly, space rightly, and light rightly, it may be often necessary to paint nothing else rightly, but the rule is simple for all that; if the artist is painting something that he knows and loves, as he knows it because he loves it, whether it be the fair strawberry of Cima, or the clear sky of Francia, or the blazing incomprehensible mist of Turner, he is all right; but the moment he does anything as he thinks it ought to be, because he does not care about it, he is all wrong. He has only to ask himself whether he cares for anything except himself; so far as he does he will make a good picture; so far as he thinks of himself a vile one. This is the root of the viciousness of the whole French school. Industry they have, learning they have, power they have, feeling they have, yet not so much feeling as ever to force them to forget themselves even for a moment; the

ruling motive is invariably vanity, and the picture therefore an abortion.

Returning to the pictures of the religious schools, we find that their open skies are also of the highest value. Their preciousness is such that no subsequent schools can by comparison be said to have painted sky at all, but only clouds, or mist, or blue canopies. The golden sky of Marco Basaiti in the Academy of Venice altogether overpowers and renders valueless that of Titian beside it. Those of Francia in the gallery of Bologna are even more wonderful, because cooler in tone and behind figures in full light. The touches of white light in the horizon of Angelico's Last Judgment are felt and wrought with equal truth. The dignified and simple forms of cloud in repose are often by these painters sublimely expressed, but of changeful cloud form they show no examples. The architecture, mountains, and water of these distances are commonly conventional; motives are to be found in them of the highest beauty, and especially remarkable for quantity and meaning of incident; but they can only be studied or accepted in the particular feeling that produced them. It may generally be observed that whatever has been the result of strong emotion is ill seen unless through the medium of such emotion, and will lead to conclusions utterly false and perilous, if it be made a subject of cold-hearted observance, or an object of systematic imitation. One piece of genuine mountain drawing, however, occurs in the landscape of Masaccio's Tribute Money. It is impossible to say what strange results might have taken place in this particular field of art, or how suddenly a great school of landscape might have arisen, had the life of this great painter been prolonged. Of this particular fresco I shall have much to say hereafter. The two brothers Bellini gave a marked

§ 11. The open skies of the religious schools, how valuable. Mountain drawing of Masaccio. Landscape of the Bellinis and Giorgione.

and vigorous impulse to the landscape of Venice, of Gentile's architecture I shall speak presently. Giovanni's, though in style less interesting and in place less prominent, occurring chiefly as a kind of frame to his pictures, connecting them with the architecture of the churches for which they were intended, is in refinement of realization, I suppose, quite unrivalled, especially in passages requiring pure gradation, as the hollows of vaultings. That of Veronese would look ghostly beside it; that of Titian lightless. His landscape is occasionally quaint and strange like Giorgione's, and as fine in color, as that behind the Madonna in the Brera gallery at Milan; but a more truthful fragment occurs in the picture in San Francesco della Vigna at Venice; and in the picture of St. Jerome in the church of San Crisostomo, the landscape is as perfect and beautiful as any background may legitimately be, and finer, as far as it goes, than anything of Titian's. It is remarkable for the absolute truth of its sky, whose blue, clear as crystal, and though deep in tone bright as the open air, is gradated to the horizon with a cautiousness and finish almost inconceivable; and to obtain light at the horizon without contradicting the system of chiaroscuro adopted in the figures which are lighted from the right hand, it is barred across with some glowing white cirri, which, in their turn, are opposed by a single dark horizontal line of lower cloud; and to throw the whole farther back, there is a wreath of rain cloud of warmer color floating above the mountains, lighted on its under edge, whose faithfulness to nature, both in hue and in its light and shattering form, is altogether exemplary; the wandering of the light among the hills is equally studied, and the whole is crowned by the grand realization of the leaves of the fig-tree alluded to (Vol. II. Part III. Chap. 5), as well as of the herbage upon the rocks. Considering that with all this care and completeness in the background,

there is nothing that is not of meaning and necessity in reference to the figures, and that in the figures themselves the dignity and heavenliness of the highest religious painters are combined with a force and purity of color, greater I think than Titian's, it is a work which may be set before the young artist as in every respect a nearly faultless guide. Giorgione's landscape is inventive and solemn, but owing to the rarity even of his nominal works I dare not speak of it in general terms. It is certainly conventional, and is rather, I imagine, to be studied for its color and its motives than its details.

§ 12. Landscape of Titian and Tintoret.

Of Titian and Tintoret I have spoken already. The latter is in every way the greater master, never indulging in the exaggerated color of Titian, and attaining far more perfect light; his grasp of nature is more extensive, and his view of her more imaginative, (incidental notices of his landscape will be found in the chapter on Imagination penetrative, of the second volume,) but he is usually too impatient to carry his thoughts as far out, or to realize with as much substantiality as Titian. In the St. Jerome of the latter, in the gallery of the Brera, there is a superb example of the modes in which the objects of landscape may be either suggested or elaborated according to their place and claim. The larger features of the ground, foliage, and drapery, as well as the lion in the lower angle, are executed with a slightness which admits not of close examination, and which, if not in shade, would be offensive to the generality of observers. But on the rock above the lion, where it turns towards the light, and where the eye is intended to dwell, there is a wreath of ivy of which every leaf is separately drawn with the greatest accuracy and care, and beside it a lizard, studied with equal earnestness, yet always with that right grandeur of manner to which I have alluded in the preface. Tintoret seldom reaches or attempts the elaboration in sub-

stance and color of these objects, but he is even more truth-telling and certain in his rendering of all the great characters of specific form, and as the painter of Space he stands altogether alone among dead masters; being the first who introduced the slightness and confusion of touch which are expressive of the effects of luminous objects seen through large spaces of air, and the principles of aerial color which have been since carried out in other fields by Turner. I conceive him to be the most powerful painter whom the world has seen, and that he was prevented from being also the most perfect, partly by untoward circumstances in his position and education, partly by the very fulness and impetuosity of his own mind, partly by the want of religious feeling and its accompanying perception of beauty; for his noble treatment of religious subjects, of which I have given several examples in the third part, appears to be the result only of that grasp which a great and well-toned intellect necessarily takes of any subject submitted to it, and is wanting in the signs of the more withdrawn and sacred sympathies.

But whatever advances were made by Tintoret in modes of artistical treatment, he cannot be considered as having enlarged the sphere of landscape conception. He took no cognizance even of the materials and motives, so singularly rich in color, which were forever around him in his own Venice. All portions of Venetian scenery introduced by him are treated conventionally and carelessly; the architectural characters lost altogether, the sea distinguished from the sky only by a darker green, while of the sky itself only those forms were employed by him which had been repeated again and again for centuries, though in less tangibility and completion. Of mountain scenery he has left, I believe, no example so far carried as that of John Bellini above instanced.

The Florentine and Ambrian schools supply us with no examples of landscape, except that introduced by their earliest masters, gradually overwhelmed under renaissance architecture.

§ 13. Schools of Florence, Milan, and Bologna.

Leonardo's landscape has been of unfortunate effect on art, so far as it has had effect at all. In realization of detail he verges on the ornamental, in his rock outlines he has all the deficiencies and little of the feeling of the earlier men. Behind the "Sacrifice for the Friends" of Giotto at Pisa, there is a sweet piece of rock incident, a little fountain breaking out at the mountain foot, and trickling away, its course marked by branches of reeds, the latter formal enough certainly, and always in triplets, but still with a sense of nature pervading the whole which is utterly wanting to the rocks of Leonardo in the Holy Family in the Louvre. The latter are grotesque without being ideal, and extraordinary without being impressive. The sketch in the Uffizii of Florence has some fine foliage, and there is of course a certain virtue in all the work of a man like Leonardo which I would not depreciate, but our admiration of it in this particular field must be qualified, and our following cautious.

No advances were made in landscape, so far as I know, after the time of Tintoret; the power of art ebbed gradually away from the derivative schools; various degrees of cleverness or feeling being manifested in more or less brilliant conventionalism. I once supposed there was some life in the landscape of Domenichino, but in this I must have been wrong. The man who painted the Madonna del Rosario and Martyrdom of St. Agnes in the gallery of Bologna, is palpably incapable of doing anything good, great, or right in any field, way, or kind, whatsoever.*

* This is no rash method of judgment, sweeping and hasty as it may appear. From the weaknesses of an artist, or failures, however numerous, we have no right to conjecture his total inability; a time may

§ 14. Claude, Salvator, and the Poussins.

Though, however, at this period the general grasp of the schools was perpetually contracting, a gift was given to the world by Claude, for which we are perhaps hardly enough grateful, owing to the very frequency of our after enjoyment of it. He set the sun in heaven, and was, I suppose, the first who attempted anything like the realization of actual sunshine in misty air. He gives the first example of the study of nature for her own sake, and allowing for the unfortunate circumstances of his education, and for his evident inferiority of intellect, more could hardly have been expected from him. His false taste, forced composition, and ignorant rendering of detail have perhaps been of more detriment to art than the gift he gave was of advantage. The character of his own mind is singular; I know of no other instance of a man's working from nature continually with the desire of being true, and never attaining the power of drawing so much as a

come when he may rise into sudden strength, or an instance occur when his efforts shall be successful. But there are some pictures which rank not under the head of failures, but of perpetrations or commissions; some things which a man cannot do nor say without sealing forever his character and capacity. The angel holding the cross with his finger in his eye, the roaring red-faced children about the crown of thorns, the blasphemous (I speak deliberately and determinedly) head of Christ upon the handkerchief, and the mode in which the martyrdom of the saint is exhibited (I do not choose to use the expressions which alone could characterize it) are perfect, sufficient, incontrovertible proofs that whatever appears good in any of the doings of such a painter must be deceptive, and that we may be assured that our taste is corrupted and false whenever we feel disposed to admire him. I am prepared to support this position, however uncharitable it may seem; a man may be tempted into a gross sin by passion, and forgiven; and yet there are some kinds of sins into which only men of a certain kind can be tempted, and which cannot be forgiven. It should be added, however, that the artistical qualities of these pictures are in every way worthy of the conceptions they realize; I do not recollect any instances of color or execution so coarse and feelingless.

bough of a tree rightly. Salvator, a man originally endowed with far higher power of mind than Claude, was altogether unfaithful to his mission, and has left us, I believe, no gift. Everything that he did is evidently for the sake of exhibiting his own dexterity; there is no love of any kind for anything; his choice of landscape features is dictated by no delight in the sublime, but by mere animal restlessness or ferocity, guided by an imaginative power of which he could not altogether deprive himself. He has done nothing which others have not done better, or which it would not have been better not to have done; in nature, he mistakes distortion for energy, and savageness for sublimity; in man, mendicity for sanctity, and conspiracy for heroism.

The landscape of Nicolo Poussin shows much power, and is usually composed and elaborated on right principles, (compare preface to second edition,) but I am aware of nothing that it has attained of new or peculiar excellence; it is a graceful mixture of qualities to be found in other masters in higher degrees. In finish it is inferior to Leonardo's, in invention to Giorgione's, in truth to Titian's, in grace to Raffaelle's. The landscapes of Gaspar have serious feeling and often valuable and solemn color; virtueless otherwise, they are full of the most degraded mannerism, and I believe the admiration of them to have been productive of extensive evil among recent schools.

§ 15. German and Flemish landscape.

The development of landscape north of the Alps, presents us with the same general phases under modifications dependent partly on less intensity of feeling, partly on diminished availableness of landscape material. That of the religious painters is treated with the same affectionate completion; but exuberance of fancy sometimes diminishes the influence of the imagination, and the absence of the Italian force of passion admits of more patient and some-

what less intellectual elaboration. A morbid habit of mind is evident in many, seeming to lose sight of the balance and relations of things, so as to become intense in trifles, gloomily minute, as in Albert Durer; and this mingled with a feverish operation of the fancy, which appears to result from certain habitual conditions of bodily health rather than of mental culture, (and of which the sickness without the power is eminently characteristic of the modern Germans;) but with all this there are virtues of the very highest order in those schools, and I regret that my knowledge is insufficient to admit of my giving any detailed account of them.

In the landscape of Rembrandt and Rubens, we have the northern parallel to the power of the Venetians. Among the etchings and drawings of Rembrandt, landscape thoughts may be found not unworthy of Titian, and studies from nature of sublime fidelity; but his system of chiaroscuro was inconsistent with the gladness, and his peculiar modes of feeling with the grace, of nature; nor from my present knowledge can I name any work on canvas in which he has carried out the dignity of his etched conceptions, or exhibited any perceptiveness of new truths.

Not so Rubens, who perhaps furnishes us with the first instances of complete unconventional unaffected landscape. His treatment is healthy, manly, and rational, not very affectionate, yet often condescending to minute and multitudinous detail; always as far as it goes pure, forcible, and refreshing, consummate in composition, and marvellous in color. In the Pitti palace, the best of its two Rubens landscapes has been placed near a characteristic and highly-finished Titian, the marriage of St. Catherine. But for the grandeur of line and solemn feeling in the flock of sheep, and the figures of the latter work, I doubt if all its glow and depth of tone could support its over-charged green and blue against the open breezy

sunshine of the Fleming. I do not mean to rank the art of Rubens with that of Titian, but it is always to be remembered that Titian hardly ever paints sunshine, but a certain opalescent twilight which has as much of human emotion as of imitative truth in it,—

> "The clouds that gather round the setting sun
> Do take a sober coloring from an eye
> That hath kept watch o'er man's mortality:"

and that art of this kind must always be liable to some appearance of failure when compared with a less pathetic statement of facts.

It is to be noted, however, that the licenses taken by Rubens in particular instances are as bold as his general statements are sincere. In the landscape just instanced the horizon is an oblique line; in the Sunset of our own gallery many of the shadows fall at right angles to the light; and in a picture in the Dulwich gallery a rainbow is seen by the spectator at the side of the sun.

These bold and frank licenses are not to be considered as detracting from the rank of the painter; they are usually characteristic of those minds whose grasp of nature is so certain and extensive as to enable them fearlessly to sacrifice a truth of actuality to a truth of feeling. Yet the young artist must keep in mind that the painter's greatness consists not in his taking, but in his atoning for them.

§ 16. The lower Dutch schools.

Among the professed landscapists of the Dutch school, we find much dexterous imitation of certain kinds of nature, remarkable usually for its persevering rejection of whatever is great, valuable, or affecting in the object studied. Where, however, they show real desire to paint what they saw as far as they saw it, there is of course much in them that is instructive, as in Cuyp and in the etchings of Waterloo, which have even very sweet and genuine feel-

ing; and so in some of their architectural painters. But the object of the great body of them is merely to display manual dexterities of one kind or another, and their effect on the public mind is so totally for evil, that though I do not deny the advantage an artist of real judgment may derive from the study of some of them, I conceive the best patronage that any monarch could possibly bestow upon the arts, would be to collect the whole body of them into a grand gallery and burn it to the ground.

§ 17. English school, Wilson and Gainsborough.

Passing to the English school, we find a connecting link between them and the Italians formed by Richard Wilson. Had this artist studied under favorable circumstances, there is evidence of his having possessed power enough to produce an original picture; but, corrupted by study of the Poussins, and gathering his materials chiefly in their field, the district about Rome—a district especially unfavorable, as exhibiting no pure or healthy nature, but a diseased and overgrown Flora among half-developed volcanic rocks, loose calcareous concretions, and mouldering wrecks of buildings—and whose spirit, I conceive, to be especially opposed to the natural tone of the English mind, his originality was altogether overpowered, and, though he paints in a manly way and occasionally reaches exquisite tones of color, as in the small and very precious picture belonging to Mr. Rogers, and sometimes manifests some freshness of feeling, as in the Villa of Mæcenas of our National Gallery, yet his pictures are in general mere diluted adaptations from Poussin and Salvator, without the dignity of the one or the fire of the other.

Not so Gainsborough—a great name his, whether of the English or any other school. The greatest colorist since Rubens, and the last, I think, of legitimate colorists; that is to say, of those who were fully acquainted

with the power of their material; pure in his English feeling, profound in his seriousness, graceful in his gayety, there are nevertheless certain deductions to be made from his worthiness which yet I dread to make, because my knowledge of his landscape works is not extensive enough to justify me in speaking of them decisively; but this is to be noted of all that I know, that they are rather motives of feeling and color than earnest studies; that their execution is in some degree mannered, and always hasty; that they are altogether wanting in the affectionate detail of which I have already spoken; and that their color is in some measure dependent on a bituminous brown and conventional green which have more of science than of truth in them. These faults may be sufficiently noted in the magnificent picture presented by him to the Royal Academy, and tested by a comparison of it with the Turner (Llanberis,) in the same room. Nothing can be more attractively luminous or aerial than the distance of the Gainsborough, nothing more bold or inventive than the forms of its crags and the diffusion of the broad distant light upon them, where a vulgar artist would have thrown them into dark contrast. But it will be found that the light of the distance is brought out by a violent exaggeration of the gloom in the valley; that the forms of the green trees which bear the chief light are careless and ineffective; that the markings of the crags are equally hasty; and that no object in the foreground has realization enough to enable the eye to rest upon it. The Turner, a much feebler picture in its first impression, and altogether inferior in the quality and value of its individual hues, will yet be found in the end more forcible, because unexaggerated; its gloom is moderate and aerial, its light deep in tone, its color entirely unconventional, and the forms of its rocks studied with the most devoted care. With Gainsborough terminates

the series of painters connected with the elder schools. By whom, among those yet living or lately lost, the impulse was first given to modern landscape, I attempt not to decide. Such questions are rather invidious than interesting; the particular tone or direction of any school seems to me always to have resulted rather from certain phases of national character, limited to particular periods, than from individual teaching; and, especially among moderns, what has been good in each master has been commonly original.

§ 18. Constable, Calcott.

I have already alluded to the simplicity and earnestness of the mind of Constable; to its vigorous rupture with school laws, and to its unfortunate error on the opposite side. Unteachableness seems to have been a main feature of his character, and there is corresponding want of veneration in the way he approaches nature herself. His early education and associations were also against him; they induced in him a morbid preference of subjects of a low order. I have never seen any work of his in which there were any signs of his being able to draw, and hence even the most necessary details are painted by him inefficiently. His works are also eminently wanting both in rest and refinement, and Fuseli's jesting compliment is too true; for the showery weather in which the artist delights, misses alike the majesty of storm and the loveliness of calm weather: it is great-coat weather, and nothing more. There is strange want of depth in the mind which has no pleasure in sunbeams but when piercing painfully through clouds, nor in foliage but when shaken by the wind, nor in light itself but when flickering, glistening, restless, and feeble. Yet, with all these deductions, his works are to be deeply respected as thoroughly original, thoroughly honest, free from affectation, manly in manner, frequently successful in cool color, and especially realizing certain motives of English scenery

with perhaps as much affection as such scenery, unless when regarded through media of feeling derived from higher sources, is calculated to inspire.

On the works of Calcott, high as his reputation stands, I should look with far less respect; I see not any preference or affection in the artist; there is no tendency in him with which we can sympathize, nor does there appear any sign of aspiration, effort, or enjoyment in any one of his works. He appears to have completed them methodically, to have been content with them when completed, to have thought them good, legitimate, regular pictures; perhaps in some respects better than nature. He painted everything tolerably, and nothing excellently; he has given us no gift, struck for us no light, and though he has produced one or two valuable works, of which the finest I know is the Marine in the possession of Sir J. Swinburne, they will, I believe, in future have no place among those considered representative of the English school.

§ 19. Peculiar tendency of recent landscape.

Throughout the range of elder art it will be remembered we have found no instance of the faithful painting of mountain scenery, except in a faded background of Masaccio's: nothing more than rocky eminences, undulating hills, or fantastic crags, and even these treated altogether under typical forms. The more specific study of mountains seems to have coincided with the most dexterous practice of water-color; but it admits of doubt whether the choice of subject has been directed by the vehicle, or whether, as I rather think, the tendency of national feeling has been followed in the use of the most appropriate means. Something is to be attributed to the increased demand for slighter works of art, and much to the sense of the quality of objects now called picturesque, which appears to be exclusively of modern origin. From what feeling the character of middle-age architecture and cos-

tume arose, or with what kind of affection their forms were regarded by the inventors, I am utterly unable to guess; but of this I think we may be assured, that the natural instinct and child-like wisdom of those days were altogether different from the modern feeling, which appears to have taken its origin in the absence of such objects, and to be based rather on the strangeness of their occurrence than on any real affection for them; and which is certainly so shallow and ineffective as to be instantly and always sacrificed by the majority to fashion, comfort, or economy. Yet I trust that there is a healthy though feeble love of nature mingled with it, nature pure, separate, felicitous, which is also peculiar to the moderns; and as signs of this feeling, or ministers to it, I look with veneration upon many works which, in a technical point of view, are of minor importance.

§ 20. G. Robson, D. Cox. False use of the term "style."

I have been myself indebted for much teaching and more delight to those of the late G. Robson. Weaknesses there are in them manifold, much bad drawing, much forced color, much over-finish, little of what artists call composition; but there is thorough affection for the thing drawn; they are serious and quiet in the highest degree, certain qualities of atmosphere and texture in them have never been excelled, and certain facts of mountain scenery never but by them expressed, as, for instance, the stillness and depth of the mountain tarns, with the reversed imagery of their darkness signed across by the soft lines of faintly touching winds; the solemn flush of the brown fern and glowing heath under evening light; the purple mass of mountains far removed, seen against clear still twilight. With equal gratitude I look to the drawings of David Cox, which, in spite of their loose and seemingly careless execution, are not less serious in their meaning, nor less important in their truth. I must,

however, in reviewing those modern works in which certain modes of execution are particularly manifested, insist especially on this general principle, applicable to all times of art; that what is usually called the style or manner of an artist is, in all good art, nothing but the best means of getting at the particular truth which the artist wanted; it is not a mode peculiar to himself of getting at the same truths as other men, but the *only* mode of getting the particular facts he desires, and which mode, if others had desired to express those facts, they also must have adopted. All habits of execution persisted in under no such necessity, but because the artist has invented them, or desires to show his dexterity in them, are utterly base; for every good painter finds so much difficulty in reaching the end he sees and desires, that he has no time nor power left for playing tricks on the road to it; he catches at the easiest and best means he can get; it is possible that such means may be singular, and then it will be said that his *style* is strange; but it is not a style at all, it is the saying of a particular thing in the only way in which it possibly can be said. Thus the reed pen outline and peculiar touch of Prout, which are frequently considered as mere manner, are in fact the only means of expressing the crumbling character of stone which the artist loves and desires. That character never has been expressed except by him, nor will it ever be expressed except by his means. And it is of the greatest importance to distinguish this kind of necessary and virtuous manner from the conventional manners very frequent in derivative schools, and always utterly to be contemned, wherein an artist, desiring nothing and feeling nothing, executes everything in his own particular mode, and teaches emulous scholars how to do with difficulty what might have been done with ease. It is true that there are sometimes instances in which great masters have employed different means of getting at the

same end, but in these cases their choice has been always of those which to them appeared the shortest and most complete; their practice has never been prescribed by affectation or continued from habit, except so far as must be expected from such weakness as is common to all men; from hands that necessarily do most readily what they are most accustomed to do, and minds always liable to prescribe to the hands that which they can do most readily.

The recollection of this will keep us from being offended with the loose and blotted handling of David Cox. There is no other means by which his object could be attained. The looseness, coolness, and moisture of his herbage; the rustling crumpled freshness of his broad-leaved weeds; the play of pleasant light across his deep heathered moor or plashing sand; the melting of fragments of white mist into the dropping blue above; all this has not been fully recorded except by him, and what there is of accidental in his mode of reaching it, answers gracefully to the accidental part of nature herself. Yet he is capable of more than this, and if he suffers himself uniformly to paint beneath his capability, that which began in feeling must necessarily end in manner. He paints too many small pictures, and perhaps has of late permitted his peculiar execution to be more manifest than is necessary. Of this, he is himself the best judge. For almost all faults of this kind the public are answerable, not the painter. I have alluded to one of his grander works—such as I should wish always to see him paint—in the preface; another, I think still finer, a red sunset on distant hills, almost unequalled for truth and power of color, was painted by him several years ago, and remains, I believe, in his own possession.

The deserved popularity of Copley Fielding has rendered it less necessary for me to allude frequently to his

works in the following pages than it would otherwise have been, more especially as my own sympathies and enjoyments are so entirely directed in the channel which his art has taken, that I am afraid of trusting them too far. Yet I may, perhaps, be permitted to speak of myself so far as I suppose my own feelings to be representative of those of a class; and I suppose that there are many who, like myself, at some period of their life have derived more intense and healthy pleasure from the works of this painter than of any other whatsoever; healthy, because always based on his faithful and simple rendering of nature, and that of very lovely and impressive nature, altogether freed from coarseness, violence, or vulgarity. Various references to that which he has attained will be found subsequently: what I am now about to say respecting what he has *not* attained, is not in depreciation of what he has accomplished, but in regret at his suffering powers of a high order to remain in any measure dormant.

§ 21. Copley Fielding. Phenomena of distant color.

He indulges himself too much in the use of crude color. Pure cobalt, violent rose, and purple, are of frequent occurrence in his distances; pure siennas and other browns in his foregrounds, and that not as expressive of lighted but of local color. The reader will find in the following chapters that I am no advocate for subdued coloring; but crude color is not bright color, and there was never a noble or brilliant work of color yet produced, whose real form did not depend on the subduing of its tints rather than the elevation of them.

It is perhaps one of the most difficult lessons to learn in art, that the warm colors of distance, even the most glowing, are subdued by the air so as in no wise to resemble the same color seen on a foreground object; so that the rose of sunset on clouds or mountains has a gray in it which distinguishes it from the rose color of the

leaf of a flower; and the mingling of this gray of distance, without in the slightest degree taking away the expression of the intense and perfect purity of the color in and by itself, is perhaps the last attainment of the great landscape colorist. In the same way the blue of distance, however intense, is not the blue of a bright blue flower, and it is not distinguished from it by different texture merely, but by a certain intermixture and undercurrent of warm color, which is altogether wanting in many of the blues of Fielding's distances; and so of every bright distant color; while in foreground where colors may be, and ought to be, pure, yet that any of them are expressive of light is only to be felt where there is the accurate fitting of them to their relative shadows which we find in the works of Giorgione, Titian, Tintoret, Veronese, Turner, and all other great colorists in proportion as they are so. Of this fitting of light to shadow Fielding is altogether regardless, so that his foregrounds are constantly assuming the aspect of overcharged local color instead of sunshine, and his figures and cattle look transparent.

§ 22. Beauty of mountain foreground.

Again, the finishing of Fielding's foregrounds, as regards their drawing, is minute without accuracy, multitudinous without thought, and confused without mystery. Where execution is seen to be in measure accidental, as in Cox, it may be received as representative of what is accidental in nature; but there is no part of Fielding's foreground that is accidental; it is evidently worked and re-worked, dotted, rubbed, and finished with great labor, and where the virtue, playfulness, and freedom of accident are thus removed, one of two virtues must be substituted for them. Either we must have the deeply studied and imaginative foreground, of which every part is necessary to every other, and whose every spark of light is essential to the well-being of the whole, of which the foregrounds of

Turner in the Liber Studiorum are the most eminent examples I know, or else we must have in some measure the botanical faithfulness and realization of the early masters. Neither of these virtues is to be found in Fielding's. Its features, though grouped with feeling, are yet scattered and inessential. Any one of them might be altered in many ways without doing harm; there is no proportioned, necessary, unalterable relation among them; no evidence of invention or of careful thought, while on the other hand there is no botanical or geological accuracy, nor any point on which the eye may rest with thorough contentment in its realization.

It seems strange that to an artist of so quick feeling the details of a mountain foreground should not prove irresistibly attractive, and entice him to greater accuracy of study. There is not a fragment of its living rock, nor a tuft of its heathery herbage, that has not adorable manifestations of God's working thereupon. The harmonies of color among the native lichens are better than Titian's; the interwoven bells of campanula and heather are better than all the arabesques of the Vatican; they need no improvement, arrangement, nor alteration, nothing but love, and every combination of them is different from every other, so that a painter need never repeat himself if he will only be true; yet all these sources of power have been of late entirely neglected by Fielding; there is evidence through all his foregrounds of their being mere home inventions, and like all home inventions they exhibit perpetual resemblances and repetitions; the painter is evidently embarrassed without his rutted road in the middle, and his boggy pool at the side, which pool he has of late painted in hard lines of violent blue: there is not a stone, even of the nearest and most important, which has its real lichens upon it, or a studied form or anything more to occupy the mind than certain variations of dark and light browns. The

same faults must be found with his present painting of foliage, neither the stems nor leafage being ever studied from nature; and this is the more to be regretted, because in the earlier works of the artist there was much admirable drawing, and even yet his power is occasionally developed in his larger works, as in a Bolton Abbey on canvas, which was,—I cannot say, exhibited,—but was in the rooms of the Royal Academy in 1843.* I should have made the preceding remarks with more hesitation and diffidence, but that, from a comparison of works of this kind with the slighter ornaments of the water-color rooms, it seems evident that the painter is not unaware of the deficiencies of these latter, and con-

* It appears not to be sufficiently understood by those artists who complain acrimoniously of their position on the Academy walls, that the Academicians have in their own rooms a right to the line and the best places near it; in their taking this position there is no abuse nor injustice; but the Academicians should remember that with their rights they have their duties, and their duty is to determine among the works of artists not belonging to their body those which are most likely to advance public knowledge and judgment, and to give these the best places next their own; neither would it detract from their dignity it they occasionally ceded a square even of their own territory, as they did gracefully and rightly, and, I am sorry to add, disinterestedly, to the picture of Paul de la Roche, in 1844. Now the Academicians know perfectly well that the mass of portrait which encumbers their walls at half height is worse than useless, seriously harmful to the public taste, and it was highly criminal (I use the word advisedly) that the valuable and interesting work of Fielding, of which I have above spoken, should have been placed where it was, above three rows of eye-glasses and waistcoats. A very beautiful work of Harding's was treated either in the same or the following exhibition, with still greater injustice. Fielding's was merely put out of sight; Harding's where its faults were conspicuous and its virtues lost. It was an Alpine scene, of which the foreground, rocks, and torrents were painted with unrivalled fidelity and precision; the foliage was dexterous, the aerial gradations of the mountains tender and multitudinous, their forms carefully studied and very grand. The blemish of the picture was a buff-colored tower with a red roof; singularly meagre in detail, and conventionally relieved from a mass of gloom. The picture was placed where nothing but this tower could be seen.

cedes something of what he would himself desire to what he has found to be the feeling of a majority of his admirers. This is a dangerous modesty, and especially so in these days when the judgment of the many is palpably as artificial as their feeling is cold.

§ 23. De Wint.

There is much that is instructive and deserving of high praise in the sketches of De Wint. Yet it is to be remembered that even the pursuit of truth, however determined, will have results limited and imperfect when its chief motive is the pride of being true; and I fear that these works, sublime as many of them have unquestionably been, testify more accuracy of eye and experience of color than exercise of thought. Their truth of effect is often purchased at too great an expense by the loss of all beauty of form, and of the higher refinements of color; deficiencies, however, on which I shall not insist, since the value of the sketches, as far they go, is great; they have done good service and set good example, and whatever their failings may be, there is evidence in them that the painter has always done what he believed to be right.

§ 24. Influence of Engraving. J. D. Harding.

The influence of the masters of whom we have hitherto spoken is confined to those who have access to their actual works, since the particular qualities in which they excel, are in no wise to be rendered by the engraver. Those of whom we have next to speak are known to the public in a great measure by the help of the engraver; and while their influence is thus very far extended, their modes of working are perhaps, in some degree modified by the habitual reference to the future translation into light and shade; reference which is indeed beneficial in the care it induces respecting the arrangement of the chiaroscuro and the explanation of the forms, but which is harmful, so far as it involves a dependence rather on quantity of picturesque material than on substantial color or simple

treatment, and as it admits of indolent diminution of size and slightness of execution.

We should not be just to the present works of J. D. Harding unless he took this influence into account. Some years back none of our artists realized more laboriously, nor obtained more substantial color and texture; a large drawing in the possession of B. G. Windus, Esq., of Tottenham, is of great value as an example of his manner at the period; a manner not only careful, but earnest, and free from any kind of affectation. Partly from the habit of making slight and small drawings for engravers, and partly also, I imagine, from an overstrained seeking after appearances of dexterity in execution, his drawings have of late years become both less solid and less complete; not, however, without attaining certain brilliant qualities in exchange which are very valuable in the treatment of some of the looser portions of subject. Of the extended knowledge and various powers of this painter, frequent instances are noted in the following pages. Neither, perhaps, are rightly estimated among artists, owing to a certain coldness of sentiment in his choice of subject, and a continual preference of the picturesque to the impressive; proved perhaps in nothing so distinctly as in the little interest usually attached to his skies, which, if aerial and expressive of space and movement, content him, though destitute of story, power, or character: an exception must be made in favor of the very grand sunrise on the Swiss Alps, exhibited in 1844, wherein the artist's real power was in some measure displayed, though I am convinced he is still capable of doing far greater things. So in his foliage he is apt to sacrifice the dignity of his trees to their wildness, and lose the forest in the copse, neither is he at all accurate enough in his expression of species or realization of near portions. These are deficiencies, be it observed, of sentiment, not of perception, as there

are few who equal him in rapidity of seizure of material truth.

§ 25. Samuel Prout. Early painting of architecture, how deficient.

Very extensive influence in modern art must be attributed to the works of Samuel Prout; and as there are some circumstances belonging to his treatment of architectural subject which it does not come within the sphere of the following chapters to examine, I shall endeavor to note the more important of them here.

Let us glance back for a moment to the architectural drawing of earlier times. Before the time of the Bellinis at Venice, and of Ghirlandajo at Florence, I believe there are no examples of anything beyond conventional representation of architecture, often rich, quaint, and full of interest, as Memmi's abstract of the Duomo at Florence at S^ta^. Maria Novella; but not to be classed with any genuine efforts at representation. It is much to be regretted that the power and custom of introducing well-drawn architecture should have taken place only when architectural taste had been itself corrupted, and that the architecture introduced by Bellini, Ghirlandajo, Francia, and the other patient and powerful workmen of the fifteenth century, is exclusively of the renaissance styles; while their drawing of it furnishes little that is of much interest to the architectural draughtsman as such, being always governed by a reference to its subordinate position, so that all forceful shadow and play of color are (most justly) surrendered for quiet and uniform hues of gray and chiaroscuro of extreme simplicity. Whatever they chose to do they did with consummate grandeur, (note especially the chiaroscuro of the square window of Ghirlandajo's, which so much delighted Vasari, in S^ta^. Maria Novella; and the daring management of a piece of the perspective in the Salutation, opposite, where he has painted a flight of stairs descending in front, though the picture is twelve

feet above the eye); and yet this grandeur, in all these men, results rather from the general power obtained in their drawing of the figure than from any definite knowledge respecting the things introduced in these accessory parts; so that while in some points it is impossible for any painter to equal these accessories, unless he were in all respects as great as Ghirlandajo or Bellini, in others it is possible for him, with far inferior powers, to attain a representation both more accurate and more interesting.

In order to arrive at the knowledge of these, we must briefly take note of a few of the modes in which architecture itself is agreeable to the mind, especially of the influence upon the character of the building which is to be attributed to the signs of age.

§ 26. Effects of age upon buildings, how far desirable.

It is evident, first, that if the design of the building be originally bad, the only virtue it can ever possess will be in signs of antiquity. All that in this world enlarges the sphere of affection or imagination is to be reverenced, and all those circumstances enlarge it which strengthen our memory or quicken our conception of the dead; hence it is no light sin to destroy anything that is old, more especially because, even with the aid of all obtainable records of the past, we, the living, occupy a space of too large importance and interest in our own eyes; we look upon the world too much as our own, too much as if we had possessed it and should possess it forever, and forget that it is a mere hostelry, of which we occupy the apartments for a time, which others better than we have sojourned in before, who are now where we should desire to be with them. Fortunately for mankind, as some counterbalance to that wretched love of novelty which originates in selfishness, shallowness, and conceit, and which especially characterizes all vulgar minds, there is set in the deeper places of the heart such affec-

tion for the signs of age that the eye is delighted even by injuries which are the work of time; not but that there is also real and absolute beauty in the forms and colors so obtained, for which the original lines of the architecture, unless they have been very grand indeed, are well exchanged, so that there is hardly any building so ugly but that it may be made an agreeable object by such appearances. It would not be easy, for instance, to find a less pleasing piece of architecture than the portion of the front of Queen's College, Oxford, which has just been restored; yet I believe that few persons could have looked with total indifference on the mouldering and peeled surface of the oolite limestone previous to its restoration. If, however, the character of the building consist in minute detail or multitudinous lines, the evil or good effect of age upon it must depend in great measure on the kind of art, the material, and the climate. The Parthenon, for instance, would be injured by any markings which interfered with the contours of its sculptures; and any lines of extreme purity, or colors of original harmony and perfection are liable to injury, and are ill exchanged for mouldering edges or brown weatherstains.

But as all architecture is, or ought to be, meant to be durable, and to derive part of its glory from its antiquity, all art that is liable to mortal injury from effects of time is therein out of place, and this is another reason for the principle I have asserted in the second part, page 314. I do not at this instant recollect a single instance of any very fine building which is not improved up to a certain period by all its signs of age, after which period, like all other human works, it necessarily declines, its decline being in almost all ages and countries accelerated by neglect and abuse in its time of beauty, and alteration or restoration in its time of age.

Thus I conceive that all buildings dependent on color, whether of mosaic or painting, have their effect improved by the richness of the subsequent tones of age; for there are few arrangements of color so perfect but that they are capable of improvement by some softening and blending of this kind: with mosaic, the improvement may be considered as proceeding almost so long as the design can be distinctly seen; with painting, so long as the colors do not change or chip off.

Again, upon all forms of sculptural ornament, the effect of time is such, that if the design be poor, it will enrich it; if overcharged, simplify it; if harsh and violent, soften it; if smooth and obscure, exhibit it; whatever faults it may have are rapidly disguised, whatever virtue it has still shines and steals out in the mellow light; and this to such an extent, that the artist is always liable to be tempted to the drawing of details in old buildings as of extreme beauty, which look cold and hard in their architectural lines; and I have never yet seen any restoration or cleaned portion of a building whose effect was not inferior to the weathered parts, even to those of which the design had in some parts almost disappeared. On the front of the church of San Michele at Lucca, the mosaics have fallen out of half the columns, and lie in weedy ruin beneath; in many, the frost has torn large masses of the entire coating away, leaving a scarred unsightly surface. Two of the shafts of the upper star window are eaten entirely away by the sea wind, the rest have lost their proportions, the edges of the arches are hacked into deep hollows, and cast indented shadows on the weed-grown wall. The process has gone too far, and yet I doubt not but that this building is seen to greater advantage now than when first built, always with exception of one circumstance, that the French shattered the lower wheel window,

and set up in front of it an escutcheon with "Libertas" upon it, which abomination of desolation, the Lucchese have not yet had human-heartedness enough to pull down.

Putting therefore the application of architecture as an accessory out of the question, and supposing our object to be the exhibition of the most impressive qualities of the building itself, it is evidently the duty of the draughtsman to represent it under those conditions, and with that amount of age-mark upon it which may best exalt and harmonize the sources of its beauty: this is no pursuit of mere picturesqueness, it is true following out of the ideal character of the building; nay, far greater dilapidation than this may in portions be exhibited, for there are beauties of other kinds, not otherwise attainable, brought out by advanced dilapidation; but when the artist suffers the mere love of ruinousness to interfere with his perception of the *art* of the building, and substitutes rude fractures and blotting stains for all its fine chiselling and determined color, he has lost the end of his own art.

§ 27. Effects of light, how necessary to the understanding of detail.

So far of aging; next of effects of light and color. It is, I believe, hardly enough observed among architects that the same decorations are of totally different effect according to their position and the time of day. A moulding which is of value on a building facing south, where it takes deep shadows from steep sun, may be utterly ineffective if placed west or east; and a moulding which is chaste and intelligible in shade on a north side, may be grotesque, vulgar, or confused when it takes black shadows on the south. Farther, there is a time of day in which every architectural decoration is seen to best advantage, and certain times in which its peculiar force and character are best explained; of these niceties the architect takes little cognizance, as he must

in some sort calculate on the effect of ornament at all times; but to the artist they are of infinite importance, and especially for this reason, that there is always much detail on buildings which cannot be drawn as such, which is too far off, or too minute, and which must consequently be set down in short-hand of some kind or another; and, as it were, an abstract, more or less philosophical, made of its general heads. Of the style of this abstract, of the lightness, confusion, and mystery necessary in it, I have spoken elsewhere; at present I insist only on the arrangement and matter of it. All good ornament and all good architecture are capable of being put into short-hand; that is, each has a perfect system of parts, principal and subordinate, of which, even when the complemental details vanish in distance, the system and anatomy yet remain visible so long as anything is visible; so that the divisions of a beautiful spire shall be known as beautiful even till their last line vanishes in blue mist, and the effect of a well-designed moulding shall be visibly disciplined, harmonious, and inventive, as long as it is seen to be a moulding at all. Now the power of the artist of marking this character depends not on his complete knowledge of the design, but on his experimental knowledge of its salient and bearing parts, and of the effects of light and shadow, by which their saliency is best told. He must therefore be prepared, according to his subject, to use light, steep or level, intense or feeble, and out of the resulting chiaroscuro select those peculiar and hinging points on which the rest are based, and by which all else that is essential may be explained.

The thoughtful command of all these circumstances constitutes the real architectural draughtsman; the habits of executing everything either under one kind of effect or in one manner, or of using unintelligible and meaningless abstracts of beautiful designs, are those

which must commonly take the place of it and are the most extensively esteemed.*

Let us now proceed with our review of those artists who have devoted themselves more peculiarly to architectural subject.

§ 28. Architectural painting of Gentile Bellini and Vittor Carpaccio;

Foremost among them stand Gentile Bellini and Vittor Carpaccio, to whom we are indebted for the only existing faithful statements of the architecture of Old Venice, and who are the only authorities to whom we can trust in conjecturing the former beauty of those few desecrated fragments, the last of which are now being rapidly swept away by the idiocy of modern Venetians.

Nothing can be more careful, nothing more delicately finished, or more dignified in feeling than the works of both these men; and as architectural evidence they are the best we could have had, all the gilded parts being gilt in the picture, so that there can be no mistake or confusion of them with yellow color or light, and all the frescoes or mosaics given with the most absolute precision and fidelity. At the same time they are by no means examples of perfect architectural drawing; there is little light and shade in them of any kind, and none whatever of the thoughtful observance of temporary effect of which we have just been speaking; so that, in rendering the character of the relieved parts, their solidity, depth, or gloom, the representation fails altogether, and it is moreover lifeless from its very completion, both the signs of age and the effects of use and habitation being utterly rejected; rightly so, indeed, in these instances, (all the architecture of these painters being in background to religious subject), but wrongly so, if we

* I have not given any examples in this place, because it is difficult to explain such circumstances of effect without diagrams: I purpose entering into fuller discussion of the subject with the aid of illustration.

look to the architecture alone. Neither is there anything like aerial perspective attempted; the employment of actual gold in the decoration of all the distances, and the entire realization of their details, as far as is possible on the scale compelled by perspective, being alone sufficient to prevent this, except in the hands of painters far more practised in effect than either Gentile or Carpaccio. But with all these discrepancies, Gentile Bellini's church of St. Mark's is the best church of St. Mark's that has ever been painted, so far as I know; and I believe the reconciliation of true aerial perspective and chiaroscuro with the splendor and dignity obtained by the real gilding and elaborate detail, is a problem yet to be accomplished. With the help of the Daguerreotype, and the lessons of color given by the later Venetians, we ought now to be able to accomplish it, more especially as the right use of gold has been shown us by the greatest master of effect whom Venice herself produced, Tintoret, who has employed it with infinite grace on the steps ascended by the young Madonna, in his large picture in the church of the Madonna dell' Orto. Perugino uses it also with singular grace, often employing it for golden light on distant trees, and continually on the high light of hair, and that without losing relative distances.

§ 29. And of the Venetians generally.

The great group of Venetian painters who brought landscape art, for that time, to its culminating point, have left, as we have already seen, little that is instructive in architectural painting. The causes of this I cannot comprehend, for neither Titian nor Tintoret appears to despise anything that affords them either variety of form or of color, the latter especially condescending to very trivial details,—as in the magnificent carpet painting of the Doge Mocenigo; so that it might have been expected that in the rich colors of St. Mark's, and the magnificent

and fantastic masses of the Byzantine palaces, they would have found whereupon to dwell with delighted elaboration. This is, however, never the case, and although frequently compelled to introduce portions of Venetian locality in their backgrounds, such portions are always treated in a most hasty and faithless manner, missing frequently all character of the building, and never advanced to realization. In Titian's picture of Faith, the view of Venice below is laid in so rapidly and slightly, the houses all leaning this way and that, and of no color, the sea a dead gray green, and the ship-sails mere dashes of the brush, that the most obscure of Turner's Venices would look substantial beside it; while in the very picture of Tintoret in which he has dwelt so elaborately on the carpet, he has substituted a piece of ordinary renaissance composition for St. Mark's, and in the background has chosen the Sansovino side of the Piazzetta, treating even that so carelessly as to lose all the proportion and beauty of its design, and so flimsily that the line of the distant sea which has been first laid in, is seen through all the columns. Evidences of magnificent power of course exist in whatever he touches, but his full power is never turned in this direction. More space is allowed to his architecture by Paul Veronese, but it is still entirely suggestive, and would be utterly false except as a frame or background for figures. The same may be said with respect to Raffaelle and the Roman school.

If, however, these men laid architecture little under contribution to their own art, they made their own art a glorious gift to architecture, and the walls of Venice, which before, I believe, had received color only in arabesque patterns, were lighted with human life by Giorgione, Titian, Tintoret, and Veronese. Of the works of Tintoret and Titian, nothing now, I believe, remains; two figures of Giorgione's are still traceable on the Fondaco de'

§ 30. Fresco painting of the Venetian exteriors. Canaletto.

Tedeschi, one of which, singularly uninjured, is seen from far above and below the Rialto, flaming like the reflection of a sunset. Two figures of Veronese were also traceable till lately, the head and arms of one still remain, and some glorious olive-branches which were beside the other; the figure having been entirely effaced by an inscription in large black letters on a whitewash tablet which we owe to the somewhat inopportunely expressed enthusiasm of the inhabitants of the district in favor of their new pastor.* Judging, however, from the rate at which destruction is at present advancing, and seeing that, in about seven or eight years more, Venice will have utterly lost every external claim to interest, except that which attaches to the group of buildings immediately around St. Mark's place, and to the larger churches, it may be conjectured that the greater part of her present degradation has taken place, at any rate, within the last forty years. Let the reader with such scraps of evidence as may still be gleaned from under the stucco and paint of the Italian committees of taste, and from among the drawing-room innovations of English and German residents restore Venice in his imagination to some resemblance of what she must have been before her fall. Let him, looking from Lido or Fusina, replace

* The inscription is to the following effect,—a pleasant thing to see upon the walls, were it but more innocently placed :—

CAMPO. DI. S. MAURIZIO

DIO
CONSERVI A NOI.
LUNGAMENTE
LO ZELANTIS. E. REVERENDIS
D. LUIGI. PICCINI.
NOSTRO
NOVELLO PIEVANO.

GLI ESULTANT.
PARROCCHIANI

in the forest of towers those of the hundred and sixty-six churches which the French threw down; let him sheet her walls with purple and scarlet, overlay her minarets with gold,* cleanse from their pollution those choked canals which are now the drains of hovels, where they were once vestibules of palaces, and fill them with gilded barges and bannered ships; finally, let him withdraw from this scene, already so brilliant, such sadness and stain as had been set upon it by the declining energies of more than half a century, and he will see Venice as it was seen by Canaletto; whose miserable, virtueless, heartless mechanism, accepted as the representation of such various glory, is, both in its existence and acceptance, among the most striking signs of the lost sensation and deadened intellect of the nation at that time; a numbness and darkness more without hope than that of the grave itself, holding and wearing yet the sceptre and the crown like the corpses of the Etruscan kings, ready to sink into ashes at the first unbarring of the door of the sepulchre.

The mannerism of Canaletto is the most degraded that I know in the whole range of art. Professing the most servile and mindless imitation, it imitates nothing but the blackness of the shadows; it gives no one single architectural ornament, however near, so much form as might enable us even to guess at its actual one; and this I say not rashly, for I shall prove it by placing portions of detail accurately copied from Canaletto side by side with engravings from the Daguerreotype; it gives the buildings neither their architectural beauty nor their

* The quantity of gold with which the decorations of Venice were once covered could not now be traced or credited without reference to the authority of Gentile Bellini. The greater part of the marble mouldings have been touched with it in lines and points, the minarets of St. Mark's, and all the florid carving of the arches entirely sheeted. The Casa d'Oro retained it on its lions until the recent commencement of its Restoration.

ancestral dignity, for there is no texture of stone nor character of age in Canaletto's touch; which is invariably a violent, black, sharp, ruled penmanlike line, as far removed from the grace of nature as from her faintness and transparency; and for his truth of color, let the single fact of his having omitted *all record, whatsoever, of the frescoes* whose wrecks are still to be found at least on one half of the unrestored palaces, and, with still less excusableness, all record of the magnificent colored marbles of many whose greens and purples are still undimmed upon the Casa Dario, Casa Bianca Capello, and multitudes besides, speak for him in this respect.

Let it be observed that I find no fault with Canaletto, for his want of poetry, of feeling, of artistical thoughtfulness in treatment, or of the various other virtues which he does not so much as profess. He professes nothing but colored Daguerreotypeism. Let us have it: most precious and to be revered it would be: let us have fresco where fresco was, and that copied faithfully; let us have carving where carving is, and that architecturally true. I have seen Daguerreotypes in which every figure and rosette, and crack and stain, and fissure are given on a scale of an inch to Canaletto's three feet. What excuse is there to be offered for his omitting, on that scale, as I shall hereafter show, all statement of such ornament whatever? Among the Flemish schools, exquisite imitations of architecture are found constantly, and that not with Canaletto's vulgar, black exaggeration of shadow, but in the most pure and silvery and luminous grays. I have little pleasure in such pictures; but I blame not those who have more; they are what they profess to be, and they are wonderful and instructive, and often graceful, and even affecting, but Canaletto possesses no virtue except that of dexterous imitation of commonplace light and shade, and perhaps, with the exception of Salvator, no artist has ever fettered his unfortunate admirers more

securely from all healthy or vigorous perception of truth, or been of more general detriment to all subsequent schools.

§ 31. Expression of the effects of age on architecture by S. Prout.

Neither, however, by the Flemings, nor by any other of the elder schools, was the effect of age or of human life upon architecture ever adequately expressed. What ruins they drew looked as if broken down on purpose, what weeds they put on seemed put on for ornament. Their domestic buildings had never any domesticity, the people looked out of their windows evidently to be drawn, or came into the streets only to stand there forever. A peculiar studiousness infected all accident; bricks fell out methodically, windows opened and shut by rule; stones were chipped at regular intervals; everything that happened seemed to have been expected before; and above all, the street had been washed and the houses dusted expressly to be painted in their best. We owe to Prout, I believe, the first perception, and certainly the only existing expression of precisely the characters which were wanting to old art, of that feeling which results from the influence among the noble lines of architecture, of the rent and the rust, the fissure, the lichen, and the weed, and from the writing upon the pages of ancient walls of the confused hieroglyphics of human history. I suppose, from the deserved popularity of the artist, that the strange pleasure which I find myself in the deciphering of these is common to many; the feeling has been rashly and thoughtlessly contemned as mere love of the picturesque; there is, as I have above shown, a deeper moral in it, and we owe much, I am not prepared to say how much, to the artist by whom pre-eminently it has been excited. For, numerous as have been his imitators, extended as his influence, and simple as his means and manner, there has yet appeared nothing at all to equal him; there is *no* stone drawing, *no* vitality of architecture like Prout's. 1

say not this rashly, I have Mackenzie in my eye and many other capital imitators; and I have carefully reviewed the Architectural work of the Academicians, often most accurate and elaborate. I repeat, there is nothing but the work of Prout which is true, living, or right in its general impression, and nothing, therefore, so inexhaustibly agreeable. Faults he has, manifold, easily detected, and much declaimed against by second-rate artists; but his excellence no one has ever touched, and his lithographic work, (Sketches in Flanders and Germany,) which was, I believe, the first of the kind, still remains the most valuable of all, numerous and elaborate as its various successors have been. The second series (in Italy and Switzerland) was of less value, the drawings seemed more laborious, and had less of the life of the original sketches, being also for the most part of subjects less adapted for the development of the artist's peculiar powers; but both are fine, and the Brussels, Louvain, Cologne, and Nuremberg, subjects of the one, together with the Tours, Amboise, Geneva, and Sion, of the other, exhibit substantial qualities of stone and wood drawing, together with an ideal appreciation of the present active vital being of the cities, such as nothing else has ever approached. Their value is much increased by the circumstance of their being drawn by the artist's own hand upon the stone, and by the consequent manly recklessness of subordinate parts, (in works of this kind, be it remembered, much *is* subordinate,) which is of all characters of execution the most refreshing. Note the scrawled middle tint of the wall behind the Gothic well at Ratisbonne, and compare this manly piece of work with the wretched smoothness of recent lithography. Let it not be thought that there is any inconsistency between what I say here and what I have said respecting finish. This piece of dead wall is as much finished in relation to its *function* as a wall of Ghirlandajo's or Leonardo's in rela-

tion to theirs, and the refreshing quality is the same in both, and manifest in *all* great masters, without exception, that of the utter regardlessness of the means so that their end be reached. The same kind of scrawling occurs often in the shade of Raffaelle.

It is not only, however, by his peculiar stone touch nor perception of human character that he is distinguished. He is the most dexterous of all our artists in a certain kind of composition. No one can place figures like him, except Turner. It is one thing to know where a piece of blue or white is wanted, and another to make the wearer of the blue apron or white cap come there, and not look as if it were against her will. Prout's streets are the only streets that are accidentally crowded, his markets are the only markets where one feels inclined to get out of the way. With others we feel the figures so right where they are, that we have no expectation of their going anywhere else, and approve of the position of the man with the wheelbarrow, without the slightest fear of his running against our legs. One other merit he has, far less generally acknowledged than it should be: he is among our most sunny and substantial colorists. Much conventional color occurs in his inferior pictures (for he is very unequal) and some in all; but portions are always to be found of quality so luminous and pure that I have found these works the only ones capable of bearing juxtaposition with Turner and Hunt, who invariably destroy everything else that comes within range of them. His most beautiful tones occur in those drawings in which there is prevalent and powerful warm gray, his most failing ones in those of sandy red. On his deficiencies I shall not insist, because I am not prepared to say how far it is possible for him to avoid them. We have never seen the reconciliation of the peculiar characters he has obtained with the accurate following out of architectural detail. With

§ 32. His excellent composition and color.

his present modes of execution, farther fidelity is impossible, nor has any other mode of execution yet obtained the same results; and though much is unaccomplished by him in certain subjects, and something of over-mannerism may be traced in his treatment of others, as especially in his mode of expressing the decorative parts of Greek or Roman architecture, yet in his own peculiar Gothic territory, where the spirit of the subject itself is somewhat rude and grotesque, his abstract of decoration has more of the spirit of the reality than far more laborious imitation. The spirit of the Flemish Hotel de Ville and decorated street architecture has never been even in the slightest degree felt or conveyed except by him, and by him, to my mind, faultlessly and absolutely; and though his interpretation of architecture that contains more refined art in its details is far less satisfactory, still it is impossible, while walking on his favorite angle of the Piazzetta at Venice, either to think of any other artist than Prout or *not* to think of *him*.

§ 33. Modern architectural painting generally. G. Cattermole.

Many other dexterous and agreeable architectural artists we have of various degrees of merit, but of all of whom, it may be generally said, that they draw hats, faces, cloaks, and caps much better than Prout, but figures not so well; that they draw walls and windows but not cities, mouldings and buttresses but not cathedrals. Joseph Nash's work on the architecture of the middle ages is, however, valuable, and I suppose that Haghe's works may be depended on for fidelity. But it appears very strange that a workman capable of producing the clever drawings he has, from time to time, sent to the New Society of Painters in Water Colors, should publish lithographs so conventional, forced, and lifeless.

It is not without hesitation, that I mention a name respecting which the reader may already have been surprised at my silence, that of G. Cattermole. There are

signs in his works of very peculiar gifts, and perhaps also of powerful genius; their deficiencies I should willingly attribute to the advice of ill-judging friends, and to the applause of a public satisfied with shallow efforts, if brilliant; yet I cannot but think it one necessary characteristic of all true genius to be misled by no such false fires. The Antiquarian feeling of Cattermole is pure, earnest, and natural; and I think his imagination originally vigorous, certainly his fancy, his grasp of momentary passion considerable, his sense of action in the human body vivid and ready. But no original talent, however brilliant, can sustain its energy when the demands upon it are constant, and all legitimate support and food withdrawn. I do not recollect in any, even of the most important of Cattermole's works, so much as a fold of drapery studied out from nature. Violent conventionalism of light and shade, sketchy forms continually less and less developed, the walls and the faces drawn with the same stucco color, alike opaque, and all the shades on flesh, dress, or stone, laid in with the same arbitrary brown, forever tell the same tale of a mind wasting its strength and substance in the production of emptiness, and seeking, by more and more blindly hazarded handling, to conceal the weakness which the attempt at finish would betray.

This tendency of late, has been painfully visible in his architecture. Some drawings made several years ago for an annual illustrative of Scott's works were for the most part pure and finely felt—(though irrelevant to our present subject, a fall of the Clyde should be noticed, admirable for breadth and grace of foliage, and for the bold sweeping of the water, and another subject of which I regret that I can only judge by the engraving; Glendearg at twilight—the monk Eustace chased by Christie of the Clint Hill—which I think must have been one of the sweetest pieces of simple Border hill feeling ever

painted)—and about that time his architecture, though always conventionally brown in the shadows, was generally well drawn, and always powerfully conceived.

Since then, he has been tending gradually through exaggeration to caricature, and vainly endeavoring to attain by inordinate bulk of decorated parts, that dignity which is only to be reached by purity of proportion and majesty of line.

It has pained me deeply, to see an artist of so great original power indulging in childish fantasticism and exaggeration, and substituting for the serious and subdued work of legitimate imagination, monster machicolations and colossal cusps and crockets. While there is so much beautiful architecture daily in process of destruction around us, I cannot but think it treason to *imagine* anything; at least, if we must have composition, let the design of the artist be such as the architect would applaud. But it is surely very grievous, that while our idle artists are helping their vain inventions by the fall of sponges on soiled paper, glorious buildings with the whole intellect and history of centuries concentrated in them, are suffered to fall into unrecorded ruin. A day does not now pass in Italy without the destruction of some mighty monument; the streets of all her cities echo to the hammer, half of her fair buildings lie in separate stones about the places of their foundation; would not time be better spent in telling us the truth about these perishing remnants of majestic thought, than in perpetuating the ill-digested fancies of idle hours? It is, I repeat, treason to the cause of art for any man to invent, unless he invents something better than has been invented before, or something differing in kind. There is room enough for invention in the pictorial treatment of what exists. There is no more honorable exhibition of imaginative power, than in the selec-

§ 34. The evil in an archæological point of view of misapplied invention in architectural subject.

tion of such place, choice of such treatment, introduction of such incident, as may produce a noble picture without deviation from one line of the actual truth; and such I believe to be, indeed, in the end the most advantageous, as well as the most modest direction of the invention, for I recollect no single instance of architectural composition by any men except such as Leonardo or Veronese, who could design their architecture thoroughly before they painted it, which has not a look of inanity and absurdity. The best landscapes and the best architectural studies have been views; and I would have the artist take shame to himself in the exact degree in which he finds himself obliged in the production of his picture to lose any, even of the smallest parts or most trivial hues which bear a part in the great impression made by the reality. The difference between the drawing of the architect and artist* ought never to be, as it now commonly is, the difference between lifeless formality and witless license; it ought to be between giving the mere lines and measures of a building, and giving those lines and measures with the impression and soul of it besides. All artists should be ashamed of themselves when they find they have not the power of being true; the right wit of drawing is like the right wit of conversation, not hyperbole, not violence, not frivolity, only well expressed, laconic truth.

§ 35. Works of David Roberts: their fidelity and grace.

Among the members of the Academy, we have at present only one professedly architectural draughtsman of note, David Roberts, whose reputation is probably farther extended on the continent than that of any other of our artists, except Landseer. I am not certain, however, that I have any reason to congratulate either of my country-

* Indeed there should be no such difference at all. Every architect ought to be an artist; every very great artist is necessarily an architect.

men upon this their European estimation; for I think it exceedingly probable that in both instances it is exclusively based on their defects; and in the case of Mr. Roberts, in particular, there has of late appeared more ground for it than is altogether desirable in a smoothness and over-finish of texture which bears dangerous fellowship with the work of our Gallic neighbors.

The fidelity of intention and honesty of system of Roberts have, however, always been meritorious; his drawing of architecture is dependent on no unintelligible lines, or blots, or substituted types: the main lines of the real design are always there, and its hollowness and undercuttings given with exquisite feeling; his sense of solidity of form is very peculiar, leading him to dwell with great delight on the roundings of edges and angles; his execution is dexterous and delicate, singularly so in oil, and his sense of chiaroscuro refined. But he has never done himself justice, and suffers his pictures to fall below the rank they should assume, by the presence of several marring characters, which I shall name, because it is perfectly in his power to avoid them. In looking over the valuable series of drawing of the Holy Land, which we owe to Mr. Roberts, we cannot but be amazed to find how frequently it has happened that there was something very white immediately in the foreground, and something very black exactly behind it. The same thing happens perpetually with Mr. Roberts's pictures; a white column is always coming out of a blue mist, or a white stone out of a green pool, or a white monument out of a brown recess, and the artifice is not always concealed with dexterity. This is unworthy of so skilful a composer, and it has destroyed the impressiveness as well as the color of some of his finest works. It shows a poverty of conception, which appears to me to arise from a deficient habit of study. It will be remembered that of the sketches for this work, several

times exhibited in London, every one was executed in the same manner, and with about the same degree of completion: being all of them accurate records of the main architectural lines, the shapes of the shadows, and the remnants of artificial color, obtained, by means of the same grays, throughout, and of the same yellow (a singularly false and cold though convenient color) touched upon the lights. As far as they went, nothing could be more valuable than these sketches, and the public, glancing rapidly at their general and graceful effects, could hardly form anything like an estimate of the endurance and determination which must have been necessary in such a climate to obtain records so patient, entire, and clear, of details so multitudinous as (especially) the hieroglyphics of the Egyptian temples; an endurance which perhaps only artists can estimate, and for which we owe a debt of gratitude to Mr. Roberts most difficult to discharge. But if these sketches were all that the artist brought home, whatever value is to be attached to them as statements of fact, they are altogether insufficient for the producing of pictures. I saw among them no single instance of a downright study; of a study in which the real hues and shades of sky and earth had been honestly realized or attempted; nor were there, on the other hand, any of those invaluable-blotted-five-minutes works which record the unity of some single and magnificent impressions. Hence the pictures which have been painted from these sketches have been as much alike in their want of impressiveness as the sketches themselves, and have never borne the living aspect of the Egyptian light; it has always been impossible to say whether the red in them (not a pleasant one) was meant for hot sunshine or for red sandstone—their power has been farther destroyed by the necessity the artist seems to feel himself under of eking out their effect by points of bright foreground color, and thus we

have been encumbered with caftans, pipes, scymetars, and black hair, when all that we wanted was a lizard, or an ibis. It is perhaps owing to this want of earnestness in study rather than to deficiency of perception, that the coloring of this artist is commonly untrue. Some time ago when he was painting Spanish subjects, his habit was to bring out his whites in relief from transparent bituminous browns, which though not exactly right in color, were at any rate warm and agreeable; but of late his color has become cold, waxy, and opaque, and in his deep shades he sometimes permits himself the use of a violent black which is altogether unjustifiable. A picture of Roslin Chapel exhibited in 1844, showed this defect in the recess to which the stairs descend, in an extravagant degree; and another exhibited in the British Institution, instead of showing the exquisite crumbling and lichenous texture of the Roslin stone, was polished to as vapid smoothness as ever French historical picture. The general feebleness of the effect is increased by the insertion of the figures as violent pieces of local color unaffected by the light and unblended with the hues around them, and bearing evidence of having been painted from models or draperies in the dead light of a room instead of sunshine. On these deficiencies I should not have remarked, but that by honest and determined painting from and of nature, it is perfectly in the power of the artist to supply them; and it is bitterly to be regretted that the accuracy and elegance of his work should not be aided by that genuineness of hue and effect which can only be given by the uncompromising effort to paint not a fine picture but an impressive and known *verity*.

The two artists whose works it remains for us to review, are men who have presented us with examples of the treatment of every kind of subject, and among the rest with portions of architecture which the best of

our exclusively architectural draughtsmen could not excel.

The frequent references made to the works of Clarkson Stanfield throughout the subsequent pages render it less necessary for me to speak of him here at any length. He is the leader of the English Realists, and perhaps among the more remarkable of his characteristics is the look of common-sense and rationality which his compositions will always bear when opposed to any kind of affectation. He appears to think of no other artist. What he has learned, has been from his own acquaintance with and affection for the steep hills and the deep sea; and his modes of treatment are alike removed from sketchiness or incompletion, and from exaggeration or effort. The somewhat over-prosaic tone of his subjects is rather a condescension to what he supposes to be public feeling, than a sign of want of feeling in himself; for in some of his sketches from nature or from fancy, I have seen powers and perceptions manifested of a far higher order than any that are traceable in his Academy works, powers which I think him much to be blamed for checking. The portion of his pictures usually most defective in this respect is the sky, which is apt to be cold and uninventive, always well drawn, but with a kind of hesitation in the clouds whether it is to be fair or foul weather; they having neither the joyfulness of rest, nor the majesty of storm. Their color is apt also to verge on a morbid purple, as was eminently the case in the large picture of the wreck on the coast of Holland exhibited in 1844, a work in which both his powers and faults were prominently manifested, the picture being full of good painting, but wanting in its entire appeal. There was no feeling of wreck about it; and, but for the damage about her bowsprit, it would have been impossible for a landsman to say whether the hull was meant for a wreck or a guardship. Neverthe-

§ 36. Clarkson Stanfield.

less, it is always to be recollected, that in subjects of this kind it is probable that much escapes us in consequence of our want of knowledge, and that to the eye of the seaman much may be of interest and value which to us appears cold. At all events, this healthy and rational regard of things is incomparably preferable to the dramatic absurdities which weaker artists commit in matters marine; and from copper-colored sunsets on green waves sixty feet high, with cauliflower breakers, and ninepin rocks; from drowning on planks, and starving on rafts, and lying naked on beaches, it is really refreshing to turn to a surge of Stanfield's true salt, serviceable, unsentimental sea. It would be well, however, if he would sometimes take a higher flight. The castle of Ischia gave him a grand subject, and a little more invention in the sky, a little less muddiness in the rocks, and a little more savageness in the sea, would have made it an impressive picture; it just misses the sublime, yet is a fine work, and better engraved than usual by the Art Union.

One fault we cannot but venture to find, even in our own extreme ignorance, with Mr. Stanfield's boats; they never look weather-beaten. There is something peculiarly precious in the rusty, dusty, tar-trickled, fishy, phosphorescent brown of an old boat, and when this has just dipped under a wave and rises to the sunshine it is enough to drive Giorgione to despair. I have never seen any effort at this by Stanfield; his boats always look new-painted and clean; witness especially the one before the ship in the wreck picture above noticed; and there is some such absence of a right sense of color in other portions of his subject; even his fishermen have always clean jackets and unsoiled caps, and his very rocks are lichenless. And, by the way, this ought to be noted respecting modern painters in general, that they have not a proper sense of the value of dirt; cottage

children never appear but in fresh got-up caps and aprons, and white-handed beggars excite compassion in unexceptionable rags. In reality, almost all the colors of things associated with human life derive something of their expression and value from the tones of impurity, and so enhance the value of the entirely pure tints of nature herself. Of Stanfield's rock and mountain drawing enough will be said hereafter. His foliage is inferior; his architecture admirably drawn, but commonly wanting in color. His picture of the Doge's palace at Venice was quite clay-cold and untrue. Of late he has shown a marvellous predilection for the realization, even to actually relieved texture, of old worm-eaten wood; we trust he will not allow such fancies to carry him too far.

§ 37. J. M. W. Turner. Force of national feeling in all great painters.

The name I have last to mention is that of J. M. W. Turner. I do not intend to speak of this artist at present in general terms, because my constant practice throughout this work is to say, when I speak of an artist at all, the very truth of what I believe and feel respecting him; and the truth of what I believe and feel respecting Turner would appear in this place, unsupported by any proof, mere rhapsody. I shall therefore here confine myself to a rapid glance at the relations of his past and present works, and to some notice of what he has failed of accomplishing: the greater part of the subsequent chapters will be exclusively devoted to the examination of the new fields over which he has extended the range of landscape art.

It is a fact more universally acknowledged than enforced or acted upon, that all great painters, of whatever school, have been great only in their rendering of what they had seen and felt from early childhood; and that the greatest among them have been the most frank in acknowledging this their inability to treat anything

successfully but that with which they had been familiar. The Madonna of Raffaelle was born on the Urbino mountains, Ghirlandajo's is a Florentine, Bellini's a Venetian; there is not the slightest effort on the part of any one of these great men to paint her as a Jewess. It is not the place here to insist farther on a point so simple and so universally demonstrable. Expression, character, types of countenance, costume, color, and accessories are with all great painters whatsoever those of their native land, and that frankly and entirely, without the slightest attempt at modification; and I assert fearlessly that it is impossible that it should ever be otherwise, and that no man ever painted or ever will paint well anything but what he has early and long seen, early and long felt, and early and long loved. How far it is possible for the mind of one nation or generation to be healthily modified and taught by the work of another, I presume not to determine; but it depends upon whether the energy of the mind which receives the instruction be sufficient, while it takes out of what it feeds upon that which is universal and common to all nature, to resist all warping from national or temporary peculiarities. Nino Pisano got nothing but good, the modern French nothing but evil, from the study of the antique; but Nino Pisano had a God and a character. All artists who have attempted to assume, or in their weakness have been affected by, the national peculiarities of other times and countries, have instantly, whatever their original power, fallen to third-rate rank, or fallen altogether, and have invariably lost their birthright and blessing, lost their power over the human heart, lost all capability of teaching or benefiting others. Compare the hybrid classification of Wilson with the rich English purity of Gainsborough; compare the recent exhibition of middle-age cartoons for the Houses of Parliament with the works of Hogarth; compare the sickly modern German

imitations of the great Italians with Albert Durer and Holbein; compare the vile classicality of Canova and the modern Italians with Mino da Fiesole, Luca della Robbia, and Andrea del Verrocchio. The manner of Nicolo Poussin is said to be Greek—it may be so; this only I know, that it is heartless and profitless. The severity of the rule, however, extends not in full force to the nationality, but only to the visibility of things; for it is very possible for an artist of powerful mind to throw himself well into the feeling of foreign nations of his own time. Thus John Lewis has been eminently successful in his seizing of Spanish character. Yet it may be doubted if the seizure be such as Spaniards themselves would acknowledge; it is probably of the habits of the people more than their hearts; continued efforts of this kind, especially if their subjects be varied, assuredly end in failure; Lewis, who seemed so eminently penetrative in Spain, sent nothing from Italy but complexions and costumes, and I expect no good from his stay in Egypt. English artists are usually entirely ruined by residence in Italy, but for this there are collateral causes which it is not here the place to examine. Be this as it may, and whatever success may be attained in pictures of slight and unpretending aim, of genre, as they are called, in the rendering of foreign character, of this I am certain, that whatever is to be truly great and affecting must have on it the strong stamp of the native land; not a law this, but a necessity, from the intense hold on their country of the affections of all truly great men; all classicality, all middle-age patent reviving, is utterly vain and absurd; if we are now to do anything great, good, awful, religious, it must be got out of our own little island, and out of this year 1846, railroads and all: if a British painter, I say this in earnest seriousness, cannot make historical characters out of the British House of Peers, he cannot paint history; and if he cannot make a Ma-

donna of a British girl of the nineteenth century, he cannot paint one at all.

The rule, of course, holds in landscape; yet so far less authoritatively, that the material nature of all countries and times is in many points actually, and in all, in principle, the same; so that feelings educated in Cumberland, may find their food in Switzerland, and impressions first received among the rocks of Cornwall, be recalled upon the precipices of Genoa. Add to this actual sameness, the power of every great mind to possess itself of the spirit of things once presented to it, and it is evident, that little limitation can be set to the landscape painter as to the choice of his field; and that the law of nationality will hold with him only so far as a certain joyfulness and completion will be by preference found in those parts of his subject which remind him of his own land. But if he attempt to impress on his landscapes any other spirit than that he has felt, and to make them landscapes of other times, it is all over with him, at least, in the degree in which such reflected moonshine takes place of the genuine light of the present day.

§ 38. Influence of this feeling on the choice of Landscape subject.

The reader will at once perceive how much trouble this simple principle will save both the painter and the critic; it at once sets aside the whole school of common composition, and exonerates us from the labor of minutely examining any landscape which has nymphs or philosophers in it.

It is hardly necessary for us to illustrate this principle by any reference to the works of early landscape painters, as I suppose it is universally acknowledged with respect to them; Titian being the most remarkable instance of the influence of the native air on a strong mind, and Claude, of that of the classical poison on a weak one; but it is very necessary to keep it in mind in reviewing the works of our great modern landscape painter.

§ 39. Its peculiar manifestation in Turner.

I do not know in what district of England Turner first or longest studied, but the scenery whose influence I can trace most definitely throughout his works, varied as they are, is that of Yorkshire. Of all his drawings, I think, those of the Yorkshire series have the most heart in them, the most affectionate, simple, unwearied, serious finishing of truth. There is in them little seeking after effect, but a strong love of place, little exhibition of the artist's own powers or peculiarities, but intense appreciation of the smallest local minutiæ. These drawings have unfortunately changed hands frequently, and have been abused and ill-treated by picture dealers and cleaners; the greater number of them are now mere wrecks. I name them not as instances, but as proofs of the artist's study in this district; for the affection to which they owe their excellence, must have been grounded long years before. It is to be traced, not only in these drawings of the places themselves, but in the peculiar love of the painter for rounded forms of hills; not but that he is right in this on general principles, for I doubt not, that, with his peculiar feeling for beauty of line, his hills would have been rounded still, even if he had studied first among the peaks of Cadore; but rounded to the same extent and with the same delight in their roundness, they would not have been. It is, I believe, to those broad wooded steeps and swells of the Yorkshire downs that we in part owe the singular massiveness that prevails in Turner's mountain drawing, and gives it one of its chief elements of grandeur. Let the reader open the Liber Studiorum, and compare the painter's enjoyment of the lines in the Ben Arthur, with his comparative uncomfortableness among those of the aiguilles about the Mer de Glace. Great as he is, those peaks would have been touched very differently by a Savoyard as great as he.

I am in the habit of looking to the Yorkshire draw-

ings, as indicating one of the culminating points in Turner's career. In these he attained the highest degree of what he had up to that time attempted, namely, finish and quantity of form united with expression of atmosphere, and light without color. His early drawings are singularly instructive in this definiteness and simplicity of aim. No complicated or brilliant color is ever thought of in them; they are little more than exquisite studies in light and shade, very green blues being used for the shadows, and golden browns for the lights. The difficulty and treachery of color being thus avoided, the artist was able to bend his whole mind upon the drawing, and thus to attain such decision, delicacy, and completeness as have never in anywise been equalled, and as might serve him for a secure foundation in all after experiments. Of the quantity and precision of his details, the drawings made for Hakewill's Italy are singular examples. The most perfect gem in execution is a little bit on the Rhine, with reeds in the foreground, in the possession of B. G. Windus, Esq., of Tottenham; but the Yorkshire drawings seem to be on the whole the most noble representatives of his art at this period.

About the time of their production, the artist seems to have felt that he had done either all that could be done, or all that was necessary, in that manner, and began to reach after something beyond it. The element of color begins to mingle with his work, and in the first efforts to reconcile his intense feeling for it with his careful form, several anomalies begin to be visible, and some unfortunate or uninteresting works necessarily belong to the period. The England drawings, which are very characteristic of it, are exceedingly unequal,—some, as the Oakhampton, Kilgarren, Alnwick, and Llanthony, being among his finest works; others, as the Windsor from Eton, the Eton College, and the Bedford, showing coarseness and conventionality.

§ 40. The domestic subjects of the Liber Studiorum.

I do not know at what time the painter first went abroad, but among the earliest of the series of the Liber Studiorum (dates 1808, 1809) occur the magnificent Mont St. Gothard, and little Devil's Bridge. Now it is remarkable that after his acquaintance with this scenery, so congenial in almost all respects with the energy of his mind, and supplying him with materials of which in these two subjects, and in the Chartreuse, and several others afterwards, he showed both his entire appreciation and command, the proportion of English to foreign subjects should in the rest of the work be more than two to one; and that those English subjects should be—many of them—of a kind peculiarly simple, and of every-day occurrence, such as the Pembury Mill, the Farm Yard Composition with the White Horse, that with the Cocks and Pigs, Hedging and Ditching, Watercress Gatherers (scene at Twickenham,) and the beautiful and solemn rustic subject called a Watermill; and that the architectural subjects instead of being taken, as might have been expected of an artist so fond of treating effects of extended space, from some of the enormous continental masses, are almost exclusively British; Rivaulx, Holy Island, Dumblain, Dunstanborough, Chepstow, St. Catherine's, Greenwich Hospital, an English Parish Church, a Saxon Ruin, and an exquisite Reminiscence of the English Lowland Castle in the pastoral, with the brook, wooden bridge, and wild duck, to all of which we have nothing foreign to oppose but three slight, ill-considered, and unsatisfactory subjects, from Basle, Lauffenbourg, and another Swiss village; and, further, not only is the preponderance of subject British, but of affection also; for it is strange with what fulness and completion the home subjects are treated in comparison with the greater part of the foreign ones. Compare the figures and sheep in the Hedging and Ditching, and the East gate, Winchelsea, together

with the near leafage, with the puzzled foreground and inappropriate figures of the Lake of Thun; or the cattle and road of the St. Catherine's Hill, with the foreground of the Bonneville; or the exquisite figure with the sheaf of corn, in the Watermill, with the vintages of the Grenoble subject.

In his foliage the same predilections are remarkable. Reminiscences of English willows by the brooks, and English forest glades mingle even with the heroic foliage of the Æsacus and Hesperie, and the Cephalus; into the pine, whether of Switzerland or the glorious Stone, he cannot enter, or enters at his peril, like Ariel. Those of the Valley of Chamounix are fine masses, better pines than other people's, but not a bit like pines for all that; he feels his weakness, and tears them off the distant mountains with the mercilessness of an avalanche. The Stone pines of the two Italian compositions are fine in their arrangement, but they are very pitiful pines; the glory of the Alpine rose he never touches; he munches chestnuts with no relish; never has learned to like olives; and, by the vine, we find him in the foreground of the Grenoble Alps laid utterly and incontrovertibly on his back.

I adduce these evidences of Turner's nationality (and innumerable others might be given if need were) not as proofs of weakness but of power; not so much as testifying want of perception in foreign lands, as strong hold on his own will; for I am sure that no artist who has not this hold upon his own will ever get good out of any other. Keeping this principle in mind, it is instructive to observe the depth and solemnity which Turner's feeling received from the scenery of the continent, the keen appreciation up to a certain point of all that is locally characteristic, and the ready seizure for future use of all valuable material.

Of all foreign countries he has most entirely entered

into the spirit of France; partly because here he found more fellowship of scene with his own England, partly because an amount of thought which will miss of Italy or Switzerland, will fathom France; partly because there is in the French foliage and forms of ground, much that is especially congenial with his own peculiar choice of form. To what cause it is owing I cannot tell, nor is it generally allowed or felt; but of the fact I am certain, that for grace of stem and perfection of form in their transparent foliage, the French trees are altogether unmatched; and their modes of grouping and massing are so perfectly and constantly beautiful that I think of all countries for educating an artist to the perception of grace, France bears the bell; and that not romantic nor mountainous France, not the Vosges, nor Auvergne, nor Provence, but lowland France, Picardy and Normandy, the valleys of the Loire and Seine, and even the district, so thoughtlessly and mindlessly abused by English travellers, as uninteresting, traversed between Calais and Dijon; of which there is not a single valley but is full of the most lovely pictures, nor a mile from which the artist may not receive instruction; the district immediately about Sens being perhaps the most valuable from the grandeur of its lines of poplars and the unimaginable finish and beauty of the tree forms in the two great avenues without the walls. Of this kind of beauty Turner was the first to take cognizance, and he still remains the only, but in himself the sufficient painter of French landscape. One of the most beautiful examples is the drawing of trees engraved for the Keepsake, now in the possession of B. G. Windus, Esq.; the drawings made to illustrate the scenery of the Rivers of France supply instances of the most varied character.

§ 41. Turner's painting of French and Swiss landscape. The latter deficient.

The artist appears, until very lately, rather to have taken from Switzerland thoughts and general concep-

tions of size and of grand form and effect to be used in his after compositions, than to have attempted the seizing of its actual character. This was beforehand to be expected from the utter physical impossibility of rendering certain effects of Swiss scenery, and the monotony and unmanageableness of others. The Valley of Chamounix in the collection of Walter Fawkes, Esq., I have never seen; it has a high reputation; the Hannibal Passing the Alps in its present state exhibits nothing but a heavy shower and a crowd of people getting wet; another picture in the artist's gallery of a land-fall is most masterly and interesting, but more daring than agreeable. The Snow-storm, avalanche, and inundation, is one of his mightiest works, but the amount of mountain drawing in it is less than of cloud and effect; the subjects in the Liber Studiorum are on the whole the most intensely felt, and next to them the vignettes to Rogers's Poems and Italy. Of some recent drawings of Swiss subject I shall speak presently.

The effect of Italy upon his mind is very puzzling. On the one hand, it gave him the solemnity and power which are manifested in the historical compositions of the Liber Studiorum, more especially the Rizpah, the Cephalus, the scene from the Fairy Queen, and the Æsacus and Hesperie: on the other, he seems never to have entered thoroughly into the spirit of Italy, and the materials he obtained there were afterward but awkwardly introduced in his large compositions.

§ 42. His rendering of Italian character still less successful. His large compositions how failing.

Of these there are very few at all worthy of him; none but the Liber Studiorum subjects are thoroughly great, and these are great because there is in them the seriousness without the materials of other countries and times. There is nothing particularly indicative of Palestine in the Barley Harvest of the Rizpah, nor in those round and awful trees; only the solemnity of the south in the

lifting of the near burning moon. The rocks of the Jason may be seen in any quarry of Warwickshire sandstone. Jason himself has not a bit of Greek about him —he is a simple warrior of no period in particular, nay, I think there is something of the nineteenth century about his legs. When local character of this classical kind is attempted, the painter is visibly cramped: awkward resemblances to Claude testify the want of his usual forceful originality: in the tenth Plague of Egypt, he makes us think of Belzoni rather than of Moses; the fifth is a total failure, the pyramids look like brick-kilns, and the fire running along the ground bears brotherly resemblance to the burning of manure. The realization of the tenth plague now in his gallery is finer than the study, but still uninteresting; and of the large compositions which have much of Italy in them, the greater part are overwhelmed with quantity and deficient in emotion. The Crossing the Brook is one of the best of these hybrid pictures; incomparable in its tree-drawing, it yet leaves us doubtful where we are to look and what we are to feel; it is northern in its color, southern in its foliage, Italy in its details, and England in its sensations, without the grandeur of the one, or the healthiness of the other.

The two Carthages are mere rationalizations of Claude, one of them excessively bad in color, the other a grand thought, and yet one of the kind which does no one any good, because everything in it is reciprocally sacrificed; the foliage is sacrificed to the architecture, the architecture to the water, the water is neither sea, nor river, nor lake, nor brook, nor canal, and savors of Regent's Park; the foreground is uncomfortable ground,—let on building leases. So the Caligula's Bridge, Temple of Jupiter, Departure of Regulus, Ancient Italy, Cicero's Villa, and such others, come they from whose hand they may, I class under the general head of "nonsense pictures."

There never can be any wholesome feeling developed in these preposterous accumulations, and where the artist's feeling fails, his art follows; so that the worst possible examples of Turner's color are found in pictures of this class; in one or two instances he has broken through the conventional rules, and then is always fine, as in the Hero and Leander; but in general the picture rises in value as it approaches to a view, as the Fountain of Fallacy, a piece of rich northern Italy, with some fairy waterworks; this picture was unrivalled in color once, but is now a mere wreck. So the Rape of Proserpine, though it is singular that in his Academy pictures even his simplicity fails of reaching ideality; in this picture of Proserpine the nature is not the grand nature of all time, it is indubitably modern,* and we are perfectly electrified at anybody's being carried away in the corner except by people with spiky hats and carabines. This is traceable to several causes; partly to the want of any grand specific form, partly to the too evident middle-age character of the ruins crowning the hills, and to a multiplicity of minor causes which we cannot at present enter into.

§ 43. His views of Italy destroyed by brilliancy and redundant quantity.

Neither in his actual views of Italy has Turner ever caught her true spirit, except in the little vignettes to Rogers's Poems. The Villa of Galileo, the nameless composition with stone pines, the several villa moonlights, and the convent compositions in the Voyage of Columbus, are altogether exquisite; but this is owing chiefly to their simplicity and perhaps in some measure to their smallness of size.

* This passage seems at variance with what has been said of the necessity of painting present times and objects. It is not so. A great painter makes out of that which he finds before him something which is independent of *all* time. He can only do this out of the materials ready to his hand, but that which he builds has the dignity of dateless age. A little painter is annihilated by an anachronism, and is conventionally antique, and involuntarily modern.

None of his large pictures at all equal them; the Bay of Baiae is encumbered with material, it contains ten times as much as is necessary to a good picture, and yet is so crude in color as to look unfinished. The Palestrina is full of raw white, and has a look of Hampton Court about its long avenue; the modern Italy is purely English in its near foliage; it is composed from Tivoli material enriched and arranged most dexterously, but it has the look of a rich arrangement, and not the virtue of the real thing. The early Tivoli, a large drawing taken from below the falls, was as little true, and still less fortunate, the trees there being altogether affected and artificial. The Florence engraved in the Keepsake is a glorious drawing, as far as regards the passage with the bridge and sunlight on the Arno, the Cascine foliage, and distant plain, and the towers of the fortress on the left; but the details of the duomo and the city are entirely missed, and with them the majesty of the whole scene. The vines and melons of the foreground are disorderly, and its cypresses conventional; in fact, I recollect no instance of Turner's drawing a cypress except in general terms.

The chief reason of these failures I imagine to be the effort of the artist to put joyousness and brilliancy of effect upon scenes eminently pensive, to substitute radiance for serenity of light, and to force the freedom and breadth of line which he learned to love on English downs and Highland moors, out of a country dotted by campaniles and square convents, bristled with cypresses, partitioned by walls, and gone up and down by steps.

In one of the cities of Italy he had no such difficulties to encounter. At Venice he found freedom of space, brilliancy of light, variety of color, massy simplicity of general form; and to Venice we owe many of the motives in which his highest powers of color have been dis-

played after that change in his system of which we must now take note.

§ 44. Changes introduced by him in the received system of art.

Among the earlier paintings of Turner, the culminating period, marked by the Yorkshire series in his drawings, is distinguished by great solemnity and simplicity of subject, prevalent gloom in light and shade, and brown in the hue, the drawing manly but careful, the minutiæ sometimes exquisitely delicate. All the finest works of this period are, I believe, without exception, views, or quiet single thoughts. The Calder Bridge, belonging to E. Bicknell, Esq., is a most pure and beautiful example. The Ivy Bridge, I imagine to be later, but its rock foreground is altogether unrivalled and remarkable for its delicacy of detail; a butterfly is seen settled on one of the large brown stones in the midst of the torrent. Two paintings of Bonneville, in Savoy, one in the possession of Abel Allnutt, Esq., the other, and, I think, the finest, in a collection at Birmingham, show more variety of color than is usual with him at the period, and are in every respect magnificent examples. Pictures of this class are of peculiar value, for the larger compositions of the same period are all poor in color, and most of them much damaged, but the smaller works have been far finer originally, and their color seems secure. There is nothing in the range of landscape art equal to them in their way, but the full character and capacity of the painter is not in them. Grand as they are in their sobriety, they still leave much to be desired; there is great heaviness in their shadows, the material is never thoroughly vanquished, (though this partly for a very noble reason, that the painter is always thinking of and referring to nature, and indulges in no artistical conventionalities,) and sometimes the handling appears feeble. In warmth, lightness, and transparency they have no chance against Gainsborough; in clear skies and air tone they are alike

unfortunate when they provoke comparison with Claude; and in force and solemnity they can in nowise stand with the landscape of the Venetians.

The painter evidently felt that he had farther powers, and pressed forward into the field where alone they could be brought into play. It was impossible for him, with all his keen and long-disciplined perceptions, not to feel that the real color of nature had never been attempted by any school; and that though conventional representations had been given by the Venetians of sunlight and twilight, by invariably rendering the whites golden and the blues green, yet of the actual, joyous, pure, roseate hues of the external world no record had even been given. He saw also that the finish and specific grandeur of nature had been given, but her fulness, space, and mystery never; and he saw that the great landscape painters had always sunk the lower middle tints of nature in extreme shade, bringing the entire melody of color as many degrees down as their possible light was inferior to nature's; and that in so doing a gloomy principle had influenced them even in their choice of subject.

For the conventional color he substituted a pure straightforward rendering of fact, as far as was in his power; and that not of such fact as had been before even suggested, but of all that is *most* brilliant, beautiful, and inimitable; he went to the cataract for its iris, to the conflagration for its flames, asked of the sea its intensest azure, of the sky its clearest gold. For the limited space and defined forms of elder landscape, he substituted the quantity and the mystery of the vastest scenes of earth; and for the subdued chiaroscuro he substituted first a balanced diminution of oppositions throughout the scale, and afterward, in one or two instances, attempted the reverse of the old principle, taking the lowest portion of the scale truly, and merging the upper part in high light.

Innovations so daring and so various could not be introduced without corresponding peril; the difficulties that lay in his way were more than any human intellect could altogether surmount. In his time there has been no one system of color generally approved; every artist has his own method and his own vehicle; how to do what Gainsborough did, we know not; much less what Titian; to invent a new system of color can hardly be expected of those who cannot recover the old. To obtain perfectly satisfactory results in color under the new conditions introduced by Turner, would at least have required the exertion of all his energies in that sole direction. But color has always been only his second object. The effects of space and form, in which he delights, often require the employment of means and method totally at variance with those necessary for the obtaining of pure color. It is physically impossible, for instance, rightly to draw certain forms of the upper clouds with the brush; nothing will do it but the pallet-knife with loaded white after the blue ground is prepared. Now it is impossible that a cloud so drawn, however glazed afterward, should have the virtue of a thin warm tint of Titian's, showing the canvas throughout. So it happens continually. Add to these difficulties, those of the peculiar subjects attempted, and to these again, all that belong to the altered system of chiaroscuro, and it is evident that we must not be surprised at finding many deficiencies or faults in such works, especially in the earlier of them, nor even suffer ourselves to be withdrawn by the pursuit of what seems censurable from our devotion to what is mighty.

§ 45. Difficulties of his later manner. Resultant deficiencies.

Notwithstanding, in some chosen examples of pictures of this kind, I will name three: Juliet and her Nurse; the old Temeraire, and the Slave Ship: I do not admit that there are at the time of their first appearing on the

walls of the Royal Academy, any demonstrably avoidable faults. I do not deny that there may be, nay, that it is likely there are; but there is no living artist in Europe whose judgment might safely be taken on the subject, or who could without arrogance affirm of any part of such a picture, that it was *wrong;* I am perfectly willing to allow, that the lemon yellow is not properly representative of the yellow of the sky, that the loading of the color is in many places disagreeable, that many of the details are drawn with a kind of imperfection different from what they would have in nature, and that many of the parts fail of imitation, especially to an uneducated eye. But no living authority is of weight enough to prove that the virtues of the picture could have been obtained at a less sacrifice, or that they are not worth the sacrifice; and though it is perfectly possible that such may be the case, and that what Turner has done may hereafter in some respects be done better, I believe myself that these works are at the time of their first appearing as perfect as those of Phidias or Leonardo; that is to say, incapable, in their way, of any improvement conceivable by human mind.

Also, it is only by comparison with such that we are authorized to affirm definite faults in any of his others, for we should have been bound to speak, at least for the present, with the same modesty respecting even his worst pictures of this class, had not his more noble efforts given us canons of criticism.

But, as was beforehand to be expected from the difficulties he grappled with, Turner is exceedingly unequal; he appears always as a champion in the thick of fight, sometimes with his foot on his enemies' necks, sometimes staggered or struck to his knee; once or twice altogether down. He has failed most frequently, as before noticed, in elaborate compositions, from redundant quantity; sometimes, like most other men, from overcare, as very

signally in a large and most labored drawing of Bamborough; sometimes, unaccountably, his eye for color seeming to fail him for a time, as in a large painting of Rome from the Forum, and in the Cicero's Villa, Building of Carthage, and the picture of this year in the British Institution; and sometimes, I am sorry to say, criminally, from taking licenses which he must know to be illegitimate, or indulging in conventionalities which he does not require.

On such instances I shall not insist, for the finding fault with Turner is not, I think, either decorous in myself or like to be beneficial to the reader.* The greater number of failures took place in the transition period,

* One point, however, it is incumbent upon me to notice, being no question of art but of material. The reader will have observed that I strictly limited the perfection of Turner's works to the time of their first appearing on the walls of the Royal Academy. It bitterly grieves me to have to do this, but the fact is indeed so. No *picture* of Turner's is seen in perfection a month after it is painted. The Walhalla cracked before it had been eight days in the Academy rooms; the vermilions frequently lose lustre long before the exhibition is over; and when all the colors begin to get hard a year or two after the picture is painted, a painful deadness and opacity comes over them, the whites especially becoming lifeless, and many of the warmer passages settling into a hard valueless brown, even if the paint remains perfectly firm, which is far from being always the case. I believe that in some measure these results are unavoidable, the colors being so peculiarly blended and mingled in Turner's present manner as almost to necessitate their irregular drying; but that they are not necessary to the extent in which they sometimes take place, is proved by the comparative safety of some even of the more brilliant works. Thus the Old Temeraire is nearly safe in color, and quite firm; while the Juliet and her Nurse is now the ghost of what it was; the Slaver shows no cracks, though it is chilled in some of the darker passages, while the Walhalla and several of the recent Venices cracked in the Royal Academy. It is true that the damage makes no further progress after the first year or two, and that even in its altered state the picture is always valuable and records its intention; but it is bitterly to be regretted that so great a painter should not leave a single work by which in succeeding ages he might be estimated. The fact of his using means so imperfect, together with that of his utter neglect of the pictures in his

when the artist was feeling for the new qualities, and endeavoring to reconcile them with more careful elaboration of form than was properly consistent with them. Gradually his hand became more free, his perception and grasp of the new truths more certain, and his choice of subject more adapted to the exhibition of them. But his powers did not attain their highest results till toward the year 1840, about which period they did so suddenly, and with a vigor and concentration which rendered his pictures at that time almost incomparable with those which had preceded them. The drawings of Nemi and Oberwesel, in the possession of B. G. Windus, Esq., were among the first evidences of this sudden advance; only the foliage in both of these is inferior; and it is remarkable that in this phase of his art, Turner has drawn little foliage, and that little badly—the great characteristic of it being its power, beauty, and majesty of color, and its abandonment of all littleness and division of thought to a single impression. In the year 1842, he made some drawings from recent sketches in Switzerland; these, with some produced in the following years, all of Swiss subject, I

§ 46. Reflection of his very recent works.

own gallery, are a phenomenon in human mind which appears to me utterly inexplicable; and both are without excuse. If the effects he desires cannot be to their full extent produced except by these treacherous means, one picture only should be painted each year as an exhibition of immediate power, and the rest should be carried out, whatever the expense of labor and time, in safe materials, even at the risk of some deterioration of immediate effect. That which is greatest in him is entirely independent of means; much of what he now accomplishes illegitimately might without doubt be attained in securer modes —what cannot should without hesitation be abandoned. Fortunately the drawings appear subject to no such deterioration. Many of them are now almost destroyed, but this has been, I think, always through ill-treatment, or has been the case only with very early works. I have myself known no instance of a drawing properly protected, and not rashly exposed to light suffering the slightest change. The great foes of Turner, as of all other great colorists especially, are the picture-cleaner and the mounter.

consider to be, on the whole, the most characteristic and perfect works he has ever produced. The Academy pictures were far inferior to them; but among these examples of the same power were not wanting, more especially in the smaller pictures of Venice. The Sun of Venice, going to sea; the San Benedetto, looking towards Fusina; and a view of Murano, with the Cemetery, were all faultless; another of Venice, seen from near Fusina, with sunlight and moonlight mixed (1844) was, I think, when I first saw it, (and it still remains little injured,) the most perfectly *beautiful* piece of color of all that I have seen produced by human hands, by any means, or at any period. Of the exhibition of 1845, I have only seen a small Venice, (still I believe in the artist's possession,) and the two whaling subjects. The Venice is a second-rate work, and the two others altogether unworthy of him.

In conclusion of our present sketch of the course of landscape art, it may be generally stated that Turner is the only painter, so far as I know, who has ever drawn the sky, (not the clear sky, which we before saw belonged exclusively to the religious schools, but the various forms and phenomena of the cloudy heavens,) all previous artists having only represented it typically or partially; but he absolutely and universally: he is the only painter who has ever drawn a mountain, or a stone; no other man ever having learned their organization, or possessed himself of their spirit, except in part and obscurely, (the one or two stones noted of Tintoret's, (Vol. II., Part iii., Ch. 3,) are perhaps hardly enough on which to found an exception in his favor.) He is the only painter who ever drew the stem of a tree, Titian having come the nearest before him, and excelling him in the muscular development of the larger trunks, (though sometimes losing the woody strength in a serpent-like flaccidity,) but missing the grace and character of the

ramifications. He is the only painter who has ever represented the surface of calm, or the force of agitated water; who has represented the effects of space on distant objects, or who has rendered the abstract beauty of natural color. These assertions I make deliberately, after careful weighing and consideration, in no spirit of dispute, or momentary zeal; but from strong and convinced feeling, and with the consciousness of being able to prove them.

This proof is only partially and incidentally attempted in the present portion of this work, which was originally written, as before explained, for a temporary purpose, and which, therefore, I should have gladly cancelled, but that, relating as it does only to simple matters of fact and not to those of feeling, it may still, perhaps, be of service to some readers who would be unwilling to enter into the more speculative fields with which the succeeding sections are concerned. I leave, therefore, nearly as it was originally written, the following examination of the relative truthfulness of elder and of recent art; always requesting the reader to remember, as some excuse for the inadequate execution, even of what I have here attempted, how difficult it is to express or explain, by language only, those delicate qualities of the object of sense, on the seizing of which all refined truth of representation depends. Try, for instance, to explain in language the exact qualities of the lines on which depend the whole truth and beauty of expression about the half-opened lips of Raffaelle's St. Catherine. There is, indeed, nothing in landscape so ineffable as this; but there is no part nor portion of God's works in which the delicacy appreciable by a cultivated eye, and necessary to be rendered in art, is not beyond all expression and explanation; I cannot tell it you, if you do not see it. And thus I have been entirely unable, in the following pages, to demonstrate clearly

§ 47. Difficulty of demonstration in such subjects.

anything of really deep and perfect truth; nothing but what is coarse and commonplace, in matters to be judged of by the senses, is within the reach of argument. How much or how little I have done must be judged of by the reader: how much it is impossible to do I have more fully shown in the concluding section.

I shall first take into consideration those general truths, common to all the objects of nature, which are productive of what is usually called "effect," that is to say, truths of tone, general color, space, and light. I shall then investigate the truths of specific form and color, in the four great component parts of landscape—sky, earth, water, and vegetation.

SECTION II.

OF GENERAL TRUTHS.

CHAPTER I.

OF TRUTH OF TONE.

As I have already allowed, that in effects of tone, the old masters have never yet been equalled; and as this is the first, and nearly the last, concession I shall have to make to them, I wish it at once to be thoroughly understood how far it extends.

I understand two things by the word "tone:"—first, the exact relief and relation of objects against and to each other in substance and darkness, as they are nearer or more distant, and the perfect relation of the shades of all of them to the chief light of the picture, whether that be sky, water, or anything else. Secondly, the exact relation of the colors of the shadows to the colors of the lights, so that they may be at once felt to be merely different degrees of the same light; and the accurate relation among the illuminated parts themselves, with respect to the degree in which they are influenced by the color of the light itself, whether warm or cold; so that the whole of the picture (or, where several tones are united, those parts of it which are under each), may be felt to be in one climate, under one kind of light, and

§ 1. Meaning of the word "tone:" First, the right relation of objects in shadow to the principal light.

§ 2. Secondly, the quality of color by which it is felt to owe part of its brightness to the hue of light upon it.

in one kind of atmosphere; this being chiefly dependent on that peculiar and inexplicable quality of each color laid on, which makes the eye feel both what is the actual color of the object represented, and that it is raised to its apparent pitch by illumination. A very bright brown, for instance, out of sunshine, may be precisely of the same shade of color as a very dead or cold brown in sunshine, but it will be totally different in *quality;* and that quality by which the illuminated dead color would be felt in nature different from the unilluminated bright one, is what artists are perpetually aiming at, and connoisseurs talking nonsense about, under the name of "tone." The want of tone in pictures is caused by objects looking bright in their own positive hue, and not by illumination, and by the consequent want of sensation of the raising of their hues by light.

§ 3. Difference between tone in its first sense and aerial perspective.

The first of these meanings of the word "tone" is liable to be confounded with what is commonly called "aerial perspective." But aerial perspective is the expression of space, by any means whatsoever, sharpness of edge, vividness of color, etc., assisted by greater pitch of shadow, and requires only that objects should be detached from each other, by degrees of intensity in *proportion* to their distance, without requiring that the difference between the farthest and nearest should be in positive quantity the same that nature has put. But what I have called "tone" requires that there should be the same sum of difference, as well as the same division of differences.

§ 4. The pictures of the old masters perfect in relation of middle tints to light.

Now the finely toned pictures of the old masters are, in this respect, some of the notes of nature played two or three octaves below her key; the dark objects in the middle distance having precisely the same relation to the light of the sky which they have in nature, but the light being nec-

essarily infinitely lowered, and the mass of the shadow deepened in the same degree. I have often been struck, when looking at a camera-obscuro on a dark day, with the exact resemblance the image bore to one of the finest pictures of the old masters; all the foliage coming dark against the sky, and nothing being seen in its mass but here and there the isolated light of a silvery stem or an unusually illumined cluster of leafage.

Now if this could be done consistently, and all the notes of nature given in this way an octave or two down, it would be right and necessary so to do: but be it observed, not only does nature surpass us in power of obtaining light as much as the sun surpasses white paper, but she also infinitely surpasses us in her power of shade. Her deepest shades are void spaces from which no light whatever is reflected to the eye; ours are black surfaces from which, paint as black as we may, a great deal of light is still reflected, and which, placed against one of nature's deep bits of gloom, would tell as distinct light. Here we are then, with white paper for our highest light, and visible illumined surface for our deepest shadow, set to run the gauntlet against nature, with the sun for her light, and vacuity for her gloom. It is evident that *she* can well afford to throw her material objects dark against the brilliant aerial tone of her sky, and yet give in those objects themselves a thousand intermediate distances and tones before she comes to black, or to anything like it—all the illumined surfaces of her objects being as distinctly and vividly brighter than her nearest and darkest shadows, as the sky is brighter than those illumined surfaces. But if we, against our poor, dull obscurity of yellow paint, instead of sky, insist on having the same relation of shade in material objects, we go down to the bottom of our scale at once; and what in the world are we to do then? Where are all our intermediate distances

§ 5. And consequently totally false in relation of middle tints to darkness.

to come from?—how are we to express the aerial relations among the parts themselves, for instance, of foliage, whose most distant boughs are already almost black?—how are we to come up from this to the foreground, and when we have done so, how are we to express the distinction between its solid parts, already as dark as we can make them, and its vacant hollows, which nature has marked sharp and clear and black, among its lighted surfaces? It cannot but be evident at a glance, that if to any one of the steps from one distance to another, we give the same quantity of difference in pitch of shade which nature does, we must pay for this expenditure of our means by totally missing half a dozen distances, not a whit less important or marked, and so sacrifice a multitude of truths, to obtain one. And this, accordingly was the means by which the old masters obtained their (truth?) of tone. They chose those steps of distance which are the most conspicuous and noticeable—that for instance from sky to foliage, or from clouds to hills—and they gave these their precise pitch of difference in shade with exquisite accuracy of imitation. Their means were then exhausted, and they were obliged to leave their trees flat masses of mere filled-up outline, and to omit the truths of space in every individual part of their picture by the thousand. But this they did not care for; it saved them trouble; they reached their grand end, imitative effect; they thrust home just at the places where the common and careless eye looks for imitation, and they attained the broadest and most faithful appearance of truth of tone which art can exhibit.

§ 6. General falsehood of such a system.

But they are prodigals, and foolish prodigals, in art; they lavish their whole means to get one truth, and leave themselves powerless when they should seize a thousand. And is it indeed worthy of being called a truth, when we have a vast history given us to relate, to the fulness of which

neither our limits nor our language are adequate, instead of giving all its parts abridged in the order of their importance, to omit or deny the greater part of them, that we may dwell with verbal fidelity on two or three? Nay, the very truth to which the rest are sacrificed is rendered falsehood by their absence, the relation of the tree to the sky is marked as an impossibility by the want of relation of its parts to each other.

§ 7. The principle of Turner in this respect.

Turner starts from the beginning with a totally different principle. He boldly takes pure white (and justly, for it is the sign of the most intense sunbeams) for his highest light, and lampblack for his deepest shade; and between these he makes every degree of shade indicative of a separate degree of distance,* giving each step of approach, not the exact difference in pitch which it would have in nature, but a difference bearing the same proportion to that which his sum of possible shade bears to the sum of nature's shade; so that an object half way between his horizon and his foreground will be exactly in half tint of force, and every minute division of intermediate space will have just its proportionate share of the lesser sum, and no more. Hence where the old masters expressed one distance, he expresses a hundred; and where they said furlongs, he says leagues. Which of these modes of procedure be most agreeable with truth, I think I may safely leave the reader to decide for himself. He will see in this very first instance, one proof of what we above asserted, that the deceptive imitation of nature is inconsistent with real truth; for the very means by which the old masters attained the apparent accuracy of tone

* Of course I am not speaking here of treatment of chiaroscuro, but of that quantity of depth of shade by which, *cæteris paribus*, a near object will exceed a distant one. For the truth of the systems of Turner and the old masters, as regards chiaroscuro, vide Chapter III. of this Section, § 8.

which is so satisfying to the eye, compelled them to give up all idea of real relations of retirement, and to represent a few successive and marked stages of distance, like the scenes of a theatre, instead of the imperceptible, multitudinous, symmetrical retirement of nature, who is not more careful to separate her nearest bush from her farthest one, than to separate the nearest bough of that bush from the one next to it.

§ 8. Comparison of N. Poussin's "Phocion."

Take, for instance, one of the finest landscapes that ancient art has produced—the work of a really great and intellectual mind, the quiet Nicholas Poussin, in our own National Gallery, with the traveller washing his feet. The first idea we receive from this picture is that it is evening, and all the light coming from the horizon. Not so. It is full noon, the light coming steep from the left, as is shown by the shadow of the stick on the right-hand pedestal—(for if the sun were not very high, that shadow could not lose itself half-way down, and if it were not lateral, the shadow would slope, instead of being vertical). Now, ask yourself, and answer candidly, if those black masses of foliage, in which scarcely any form is seen but the outline, be a true representation of trees under noonday sunlight, sloping from the left, bringing out, as it necessarily would do, their masses into golden green, and marking every leaf and bough with sharp shadow and sparkling light. The only truth in the picture is the exact pitch of relief against the sky of both trees and hills, and to this the organization of the hills, the intricacy of the foliage, and everything indicative either of the nature of the light, or the character of the objects, are unhesitatingly sacrificed. So much falsehood does it cost to obtain two apparent truths of tone. Or take, as a still more glaring instance, No. 260 in the Dulwich Gallery, where the trunks of the trees, even of those farthest off, on the left, are as black as paint can make

them, and there is not, and cannot be, the slightest increase of force, or any marking whatsoever of distance by color, or any other means, between them and the foreground.

§ 9. With Turner's "Mercury and Argus,"

Compare with these Turner's treatment of his materials in the Mercury and Argus. He has here his light actually coming from the distance, the sun being nearly in the centre of the picture, and a violent relief of objects against it would be far more justifiable than in Poussin's case. But this dark relief is used in its full force only with the nearest *leaves* of the nearest group of foliage overhanging the foreground from the left; and between these and the more distant members of the same group, though only three or four yards separate, distinct aerial perspective and intervening mist and light are shown; while the large tree in the centre, though very dark, as being very near, compared with all the distance, is much diminished in intensity of shade from this nearest group of leaves, and is faint compared with all the foreground. It is true that this tree has not, in consequence, the actual pitch of shade against the sky which it would have in nature; but it has precisely as much as it possibly can have, to leave it the same proportionate relation to the objects near at hand. And it cannot but be evident to the thoughtful reader, that whatever trickery or deception may be the result of a contrary mode of treatment, this is the only scientific or essentially truthful system, and that what it loses in tone it gains in aerial perspective.

§ 10. And with the "Datur Hora Quieti."

Compare again the last vignette in Rogers's Poems, the "Datur Hora Quieti," where everything, even the darkest parts of the trees, is kept pale and full of graduation; even the bridge where it crosses the descending stream of sunshine, rather lost in the light than relieved against it,

until we come up to the foreground, and then the vigorous local black of the plough throws the whole picture into distance and sunshine. I do not know anything in art which can for a moment be set beside this drawing for united intensity of light and repose.

Observe, I am not at present speaking of the beauty or desirableness of the system of the old masters; it may be sublime, and affecting, and ideal, and intellectual, and a great deal more; but all I am concerned with at present is, that it is not *true;* while Turner's is the closest and most studied approach to truth of which the materials of art admit.

It was not, therefore, with reference to this division of the subject that I admitted inferiority in our great modern master to Claude or Poussin, but with reference to the second and more usual meaning of the word "tone"—the exact relation and fitness of shadow and light, and of the hues of all objects under them; and more especially that precious quality of each color laid on, which makes it appear a quiet color illuminated, not a bright color in shade. But I allow this inferiority only with respect to the paintings, of Turner, not to his drawings. I could select from among the works named in Chap. VI. of this section, pieces of tone absolutely faultless and perfect, from the coolest grays of wintry dawn to the intense fire of summer noon. And the difference between the prevailing character of these and that of nearly all the paintings, (for the early oil pictures of Turner are far less perfect in tone than the most recent,) it is difficult to account for, but on the supposition that there is something in the material which modern artists in general are incapable of mastering, and which compels Turner himself to think less of tone in oil color, than of other and more important qualities. The total failures of Callcott,

§ 11. The second sense of the word "tone."

§ 12. Remarkable difference in this respect between the paintings and drawings of Turner.

whose struggles after tone ended so invariably in shivering winter or brown paint, the misfortune of Landseer with his evening sky in 1842, the frigidity of Stanfield, and the earthiness and opacity which all the magnificent power and admirable science of Etty are unable entirely to conquer, are too fatal and convincing proofs of the want of knowledge of means, rather than of the absence of aim, in modern artists as a body. Yet, with respect to Turner, however much the want of tone in his early paintings (the Fall of Carthage, for instance, and others painted at a time when he was producing the most exquisite hues of light in water-color) might seem to favor such a supposition, there are passages in his recent works (such, for instance, as the sunlight along the sea, in the Slaver) which directly contradict it, and which prove to us that where he now errs in tone, (as in the Cicero's Villa,) it is less owing to want of power to reach it, than to the pursuit of some different and nobler end. I shall therefore glance at the particular modes in which Turner manages his tone in his present Academy pictures; the early ones must be given up at once. Place a genuine untouched Claude beside the Crossing the Brook, and the difference in value and tenderness of tone will be felt in an instant, and felt the more painfully because all the cool and transparent qualities of Claude would have been here desirable, and in their place, and appear to have been aimed at. The foreground of the Building of Carthage, and the greater part of the architecture of the Fall, are equally heavy and evidently paint, if we compare them with genuine passages of Claude's sunshine. There is a very grand and simple piece of tone in the possession of J. Allnutt, Esq., a sunset behind willows, but even this is wanting in refinement of shadow, and is crude in its extreme distance. Not so with the recent Academy pictures; many of their passages are absolutely faultless;

§ 13. Not owing to want of power over the material.

all are refined and marvellous, and with the exception of the Cicero's Villa, we shall find few pictures painted within the last ten years which do not either present us with perfect tone, or with some higher beauty, to which it is necessarily sacrificed. If we glance at the requirements of nature, and her superiority of means to ours, we shall see why and how it is sacrificed.

§ 14. The two distinct qualities of light to be considered.

Light, with reference to the tone it induces on objects, is either to be considered as neutral and white, bringing out local colors with fidelity; or colored, and consequently modifying these local tints, with its own. But the power of pure white light to exhibit local color is strangely variable. The morning light of about nine or ten is usually very pure; but the difference of its effect on different days, independently of mere brilliancy, is as inconceivable as inexplicable. Everyone knows how capriciously the colors of a fine opal vary from day to day, and how rare the lights are which bring them fully out. Now the expression of the strange, penetrating, deep, neutral light, which, while it *alters* no color, brings every color up to the highest possible pitch and key of pure, harmonious intensity, is the chief attribute of finely-toned pictures by the great *colorists* as opposed to pictures of equally high tone, by masters who, careless of color, are content, like Cuyp, to lose local tints in the golden blaze of absorbing light.

§ 15. Falsehoods by which Titian attains the appearance of quality in light.

Falsehood, in this neutral tone, if it may be so called, is a matter far more of feeling than of proof, for any color is *possible* under such lights; it is meagreness and feebleness only which are to be avoided; and these are rather matters of sensation than of reasoning. But it is yet easy enough to prove by what exaggerated and false means the pictures most celebrated for this quality are endowed with their richness and solemnity of color.

In the Bacchus and Ariadne of Titian, it is difficult to imagine anything more magnificently impossible than the blue of the distant landscape;—impossible, not from its vividness, but because it is not faint and aerial enough to account for its purity of color; it is too dark and blue at the same time; and there is indeed so total a want of atmosphere in it, that, but for the difference of form, it would be impossible to tell the mountains (intended to be ten miles off) from the robe of Ariadne close to the spectator. Yet make this blue faint, aerial, and distant—make it in the slightest degree to resemble the truth of nature's color—and all the tone of the picture, all its intensity and splendor, will vanish on the instant. So again, in the exquisite and inimitable little bit of color, the Europa in the Dulwich Gallery; the blue of the dark promontory on the left is thoroughly absurd and impossible, and the warm tones of the clouds equally so, unless it were sunset; but the blue especially, because it is nearer than several points of land which are equally in shadow, and yet are rendered in warm gray. But the whole value and tone of the picture would be destroyed if this blue were altered.

§ 16. Turner will not use such means.

Now, as much of this kind of richness of tone is always given by Turner as is compatible with truth of aerial effect; but he will not sacrifice the higher truths of his landscape to mere pitch of color as Titian does. He infinitely prefers having the power of giving extension of space, and fulness of form, to that of giving deep melodies of tone; he feels too much the incapacity of art, with its feeble means of light, to give the abundance of nature's gradations; and therefore it is, that taking pure white for his highest expression of light, that even pure yellow may give him one more step in the scale of shade, he becomes necessarily inferior in richness of effect to the old masters of tone, (who always used a golden highest light,) but gains

by the sacrifice a thousand more essential truths. For, though we all know how much more like light, in the abstract, a finely-toned warm hue will be to the feelings than white, yet it is utterly impossible to mark the same number of gradations between such a sobered high light and the deepest shadow, which we can between this and white; and as these gradations are absolutely necessary to give the facts of form and distance, which, as we have above shown, are more important than any truths of tone,* Turner sacrifices the richness of his picture to its completeness—the manner of the statement to its matter. And not only is he right in doing this for the sake of space, but he is right also in the abstract question of color; for as we observed above (Sect. 14,) it is only the white light—the perfect unmodified group of rays—which will bring out local color perfectly; and if the picture, therefore, is to be complete in its system of color, that is, if it is to have each of the three primitives in their purity, it *must* have white for its highest light, otherwise the purity of one of them at least will be impossible. And this leads us to notice the second and more frequent quality of light, (which is assumed if we make our highest representation of it yellow,) the positive hue, namely, which it may itself possess, of course modifying whatever local tints it exhibits, and thereby rendering certain colors necessary, and certain colors impossible. Under the direct yellow light of a descending sun, for instance, pure white and pure blue are both impossible; because the purest whites and blues that nature could produce would be turned in some degree into gold or green by it; and when the sun is within half a degree of the horizon, if

§ 17. But gains in essential truth by the sacrifice.

§ 18. The second quality of light.

* More important, observe, *as matters of truth or fact.* It may often chance that, as a matter of feeling, the tone is the more important of the two; but with this we have here no concern.

the sky be clear, a rose light supersedes the golden one, still more overwhelming in its effect on local color. I have seen the pale fresh green of spring vegetation in the gardens of Venice, on the Lido side, turned pure russet, or between that and crimson, by a vivid sunset of this kind, every particle of green color being absolutely annihilated. And so under all colored lights, (and there are few, from dawn to twilight, which are not slightly tinted by some accident of atmosphere,) there is a change of local color, which, when in a picture it is so exactly proportioned that we feel at once both what the local colors are in themselves, and what is the color and strength of the light upon them, gives us truth of tone.

§ 19. The perfection of Cuyp in this respect interfered with by numerous solecisms.

For expression of effects of yellow sunlight, parts might be chosen out of the good pictures of Cuyp, which have never been equalled in art. But I much doubt if there be a single *bright* Cuyp in the world, which, taken as a whole, does not present many glaring solecisms in tone. I have not seen many fine pictures of his, which were not utterly spoiled by the vermilion dress of some principal figure, a vermilion totally unaffected and unwarmed by the golden hue of the rest of the picture; and, what is worse, with little distinction, between its own illumined and shaded parts, so that it appears altogether out of sunshine, the color of a bright vermilion in dead, cold daylight. It is possible that the original color may have gone down in all cases, or that these parts may have been villanously repainted: but I am the rather disposed to believe them genuine, because even throughout the best of his pictures there are evident recurrences of the same kind of solecism in other colors—greens for instance—as in the steep bank on the right of the largest picture in the Dulwich Gallery; and browns, as in the lying cow in the same picture, which is in most visible and

painful contrast with the one standing beside it, the flank of the standing one being bathed in breathing sunshine, and the reposing one laid in with as dead, opaque, and lifeless brown as ever came raw from a novice's pallet. And again, in that marked 83, while the figures on the right are walking in the most precious light, and those just beyond them in the distance leave a furlong or two of pure visible sunbeams between us and them, the cows in the centre are entirely deprived, poor things, of both light and air. And these failing parts, though they often escape the eye when we are near the picture and able to dwell upon what is beautiful in it, yet so injure its whole effect that I question if there be many Cuyps in which vivid colors occur, which will not lose their effect, and become cold and flat at a distance of ten or twelve paces, retaining their influence only when the eye is close enough to rest on the right parts without including the whole. Take, for instance, the large one in our National Gallery, seen from the opposite door, where the black cow appears a great deal nearer than the dogs, and the golden tones of the distance look like a sepia drawing rather than like sunshine, owing chiefly to the utter want of aerial grays indicated through them.

Now, there is no instance in the works of Turner of anything so faithful and imitative of sunshine as the best parts of Cuyp; but at the same time, there is not a single vestige of the same kind of solecism. It is true, that in his fondness for color, Turner is in the habit of allowing excessively cold fragments in his warmest pictures; but these are never, observe, warm colors with no light upon them, useless as contrasts while they are discords in the tone; but they are bits of the very coolest tints, partially removed from the general influence, and exquisitely valuable as color, though, with all deference be it spoken, I think them sometimes slightly destructive of what would

§ 20. Turner is not so perfect in parts — far more so in the whole.

otherwise be perfect tone. For instance, the two blue and white stripes on the drifting flag of the Slave Ship, are, I think, the least degree too purely cool. I think both the blue and white would be impossible under such a light; and in the same way the white parts of the dress of the Napoleon interfered by their coolness with the perfectly managed warmth of all the rest of the picture. But both these lights are reflexes, and it is nearly impossible to say what tones may be assumed even by the warmest light reflected from a cool surface; so that we cannot actually convict these parts of falsehood, and though we should have liked the *tone* of the picture better had they been slightly warmer we cannot but like the *color* of the picture better with them as they are; while Cuyp's failing portions are not only evidently and demonstrably false, being in direct light, but are as disagreeable in color as false in tone, and injurious to everything near them. And the best proof of the grammatical accuracy of the tones of Turner is in the perfect and unchanging influence of all his pictures at any distance. We approach only to follow the sunshine into every cranny of the leafage, and retire only to feel it diffused over the scene, the whole picture glowing like a sun or star at whatever distance we stand, and lighting the air between us and it; while many even of the best pictures of Claude must be looked close into to be felt, and lose light every foot that we retire. The smallest of the three seaports in the National Gallery is valuable and right in tone when we are close to it; but ten yards off, it is all brick-dust, offensively and evidently false in its whole hue.

The comparison of Turner with Cuyp and Claude may sound strange in most ears; but this is chiefly because we are not in the habit of analyzing and dwelling upon those difficult and daring passages of the modern master which do

§ 21. The power in Turner of uniting a number of tones.

not at first appeal to our ordinary notions of truth, owing to his habit of uniting two, three, or even more separate tones in the same composition. In this also he strictly follows nature, for wherever climate changes, tone changes, and the climate changes with every 200 feet of elevation, so that the upper clouds are always different in tone from the lower ones, these from the rest of the landscape, and in all probability, some part of the horizon from the rest. And when nature allows this in a high degree, as in her most gorgeous effects she always will, she does not herself impress at once with intensity of tone, as in the deep and quiet yellows of a July evening, but rather with the magnificence and variety of associated color, in which, if we give time and attention to it, we shall gradually find the solemnity and the depth of twenty tones instead of one. Now in Turner's power of associating cold with warm light, no one has ever approached, or even ventured into the same field with him. The old masters, content with one simple tone, sacrificed to its unity all the exquisite gradations and varied touches of relief and change by which nature unites her hours with each other. They gave the warmth of the sinking sun, overwhelming all things in its gold; but they did not give those gray passages about the horizon where, seen through its dying light, the cool and the gloom of night gather themselves for their victory. Whether it was in them impotence or judgment, it is not for me to decide. I have only to point to the daring of Turner in this respect, as something to which art affords no matter of comparison, as that in which the mere attempt is, in itself, superiority. Take the evening effect with the Temeraire. That picture will not, at the first glance, deceive as a piece of actual sunlight; but this is because there is in it more than sunlight, because under the blazing veil of vaulted fire which lights the vessel on her last path, there is a blue, deep, desolate

hollow of darkness, out of which you can hear the voice of the night wind, and the dull boom of the disturbed sea; because the cold, deadly shadows of the twilight are gathering through every sunbeam, and moment by moment as you look, you will fancy some new film and faintness of the night has risen over the vastness of the departing form.

§ 22. Recapitulation.

And if, in effects of this kind, time be taken to dwell upon the individual tones, and to study the laws of their reconcilement, there will be found in the recent Academy pictures of this great artist a mass of various truth to which nothing can be brought for comparison, which stands not only unrivalled, but uncontended with, and which, when in carrying out it may be inferior to some of the picked passages of the old masters, is so through deliberate choice rather to suggest a multitude of truths than to imitate one, and through a strife with difficulties of effect of which art can afford no parallel example. Nay, in the next chapter, respecting color, we shall see farther reason for doubting the truth of Claude, Cuyp, and Poussin, in tone, —reason so palpable that if these were all that were to be contended with, I should scarcely have allowed any inferiority in Turner whatsoever; * but I allow it, not so much with reference to the deceptive imitations of sunlight, wrought out with desperate exaggerations of shade, of the professed landscape painters, as with reference to the glory of Rubens, the glow of Titian, the silver tenderness of Cagliari, and perhaps more than all to

* We must not leave the subject of tone without alluding to the works of the late George Barrett, which afford glorious and exalted passages of light; and John Varley, who, though less truthful in his aim, was frequently deep in his feeling. Some of the sketches of De Wint are also admirable in this respect. As for our oil pictures, the less that is said about them the better. Callcott has the truest aim; but not having any eye for color, it is impossible for him to succeed in tone.

the precious and pure passages of intense feeling and heavenly light, holy and undefiled, and glorious with the changeless passion of eternity, which sanctify with their shadeless peace the deep and noble conceptions of the early school of Italy,—of Fra Bartolomeo, Perugino, and the early mind of Raffaelle.

CHAPTER II.

OF TRUTH OF COLOR.

§ 1. Observations on the color of G. Poussin's La Riccia.

THERE is, in the first room of the National Gallery, a landscape attributed to Gaspar Poussin, called sometimes Aricia, sometimes Le or La Riccia, according to the fancy of catalogue printers. Whether it can be supposed to resemble the ancient Aricia, now La Riccia, close to Albano, I will not take upon me to determine, seeing that most of the towns of these old masters are quite as like one place as another; but, at any rate, it is a town on a hill, wooded with two-and-thirty bushes, of very uniform size, and possessing about the same number of leaves each. These bushes are all painted in with one dull opaque brown, becoming very slightly greenish towards the lights, and discover in one place a bit of rock, which of course would in nature have been cool and gray beside the lustrous hues of foliage, and which, therefore, being moreover completely in shade, is consistently and scientifically painted of a very clear, pretty, and positive brick-red, the only thing like color in the picture. The foreground is a piece of road, which in order to make allowance for its greater nearness, for its being completely in light, and, it may be presumed, for the quantity of vegetation usually present on carriage-roads, is given in a very cool green gray, and the truth of the picture is completed by a number of dots in the sky on the right, with a stalk to them, of a sober and similar brown.

§ 2. As compared with the actual scene.

Not long ago, I was slowly descending this very bit of carriage-road, the first turn after you leave Albano, not a little impeded by the worthy successors of the ancient prototypes of Veiento.* It had been wild weather when I left Rome, and all across the Campagna the clouds were sweeping in sulphurous blue, with a clap of thunder or two, and breaking gleams of sun along the Claudian aqueduct lighting up the infinity of its arches like the bridge of chaos. But as I climbed the long slope of the Alban mount, the storm swept finally to the north, and the noble outline of the domes of Albano and graceful darkness of its ilex grove rose against pure streaks of alternate blue and amber, the upper sky gradually flushing through the last fragments of rain-cloud in deep, palpitating azure, half ether and half dew. The noon-day sun came slanting down the rocky slopes of La Riccia, and its masses of entangled and tall foliage, whose autumnal tints were mixed with the wet verdure of a thousand evergreens, were penetrated with it as with rain. I cannot call it color, it was conflagration. Purple, and crimson, and scarlet, like the curtains of God's tabernacle, the rejoicing trees sank into the valley in showers of light, every separate leaf quivering with buoyant and burning life; each, as it turned to reflect or to transmit the sunbeam, first a torch and then an emerald. Far up into the recesses of the valley, the green vistas arched like the hollows of mighty waves of some crystalline sea, with the arbutus flowers dashed along their flanks for foam, and silver flakes of orange spray tossed into the air around them, breaking over the gray walls of rock into a thousand separate stars, fading and kindling alternately as the weak wind lifted and let

* "Cæcus adulator—
Dignus Aricinos qui mendicaret ad axes,
Blandaque devexæ jactaret basia rhedæ."

them fall. Every glade of grass burned like the golden floor of heaven, opening in sudden gleams as the foliage broke and closed above it, as sheet-lightning opens in a cloud at sunset; the motionless masses of dark rock —dark though flushed with scarlet lichen,—casting their quiet shadows across its restless radiance, the fountain underneath them filling its marble hollow with blue mist and fitful sound, and over all—the multitudinous bars of amber and rose, the sacred clouds that have no darkness, and only exist to illumine, were seen in fathomless intervals between the solemn and orbed repose of the stone pines, passing to lose themselves in the last, white, blinding lustre of the measureless line where the Campagna melted into the blaze of the sea.

§ 3. Turner himself is inferior in brilliancy to nature.

Tell me who is likest this, Poussin or Turner? Not in his most daring and dazzling efforts could Turner himself come near it; but you could not at the time have thought or remembered the work of any other man as having the remotest hue or resemblance of what you saw. Nor am I speaking of what is uncommon or unnatural; there is no climate, no place, and scarcely an hour, in which nature does not exhibit color which no mortal effort can imitate or approach. For all our artificial pigments are, even when seen under the same circumstances, dead and lightless beside her living color; the green of a growing leaf, the scarlet of a fresh flower, no art nor expedient can reach; but in addition to this, nature exhibits her hues under an intensity of sunlight which trebles their brilliancy, while the painter, deprived of this splendid aid, works still with what is actually a gray shadow compared to the force of nature's color. Take a blade of grass and a scarlet flower, and place them so as to receive sunlight beside the brightest canvas that ever left Turner's easel, and the picture will be extinguished. So far from out-facing nature, he does not, as far as mere vividness

of color goes, one-half reach her;—but does he use this brilliancy of color on objects to which it does not properly belong? Let us compare his works in this respect with a few instances from the old masters.

§ 4. Impossible colors of Salvator, Titian;

There is, on the left hand side of Salvator's Mercury and the Woodman in our National Gallery, something, without doubt intended for a rocky mountain, in the middle distance, near enough for all its fissures and crags to be distinctly visible, or, rather, for a great many awkward scratches of the brush over it to be visible, which, though not particularly representative either of one thing or another, are without doubt intended to be symbolical of rocks. Now no mountain in full light, and near enough for its details of crag to be seen, is without great variety of delicate color. Salvator has painted it throughout without one instant of variation; but this, I suppose, is simplicity and generalization;—let it pass: but what is the color? *Pure sky blue*, without one grain of gray, or any modifying hue whatsoever;—the same brush which had just given the bluest parts of the sky, has been more loaded at the same part of the pallet, and the whole mountain thrown in with unmitigated ultramarine. Now mountains only can become pure blue when there is so much air between us and them that they become mere flat, dark shades, every detail being totally lost: they become blue when they become air, and not till then. Consequently this part of Salvator's painting, being of hills perfectly clear and near, with all their details visible, is, as far as color is concerned, broad, bold falsehood—the direct assertion of direct impossibility.

In the whole range of Turner's works, recent or of old date, you will not find an instance of anything near enough to have details visible, painted in sky blue. Wherever Turner gives blue, there he gives atmosphere; it is air, not object. Blue he gives to his sea; so does nature;—

blue he gives, sapphire deep, to his extreme distance; so does nature;—blue he gives to the misty shadows and hollows of his hills; so does nature: but blue he gives *not*, where detailed and illumined surface are visible; as he comes into light and character, so he breaks into warmth and varied hue; nor is there in one of his works, and I speak of the Academy pictures especially, one touch of cold color which is not to be accounted for, and proved right and full of meaning.

I do not say that Salvator's distance is not artist-like; both in that, and in the yet more glaringly false distances of Titian above alluded to, and in hundreds of others of equal boldness of exaggeration, I can take delight, and perhaps should be sorry to see them other than they are; but it is somewhat singular to hear people talking of Turner's exquisite care and watchfulness in color as false, while they receive such cases of preposterous and audacious fiction with the most generous and simple credulity.

§ 5. Poussin, and Claude.

Again, in the upper sky of the picture of Nicolas Poussin, before noticed, the clouds are of a very fine clear olive-green, about the same tint as the brightest parts of the trees beneath them. They cannot have altered, (or else the trees must have been painted in gray), for the hue is harmonious and well united with the rest of the picture, and the blue and white in the centre of the sky are still fresh and pure. Now a green sky in open and illumined distance is very frequent, and very beautiful; but rich olive-green clouds, as far as I am acquainted with nature, are a piece of color in which she is not apt to indulge. You will be puzzled to show me such a thing in the recent works of Turner.* Again, take any important group of trees, I

* There is perhaps nothing more characteristic of a great colorist than his power of using greens in strange places without their being felt as such, or at least than a constant preference of green gray to

do not care whose—Claude's, Salvator's, or Poussin's—with lateral light (that in the Marriage of Isaac and Rebecca, or Gaspar's Sacrifice of Isaac, for instance:) Can it be seriously supposed that those murky browns and melancholy greens are representative of the tints of leaves under full noonday sun? I know that you cannot help looking upon all these pictures as pieces of dark relief against a light wholly proceeding from the distances; but they are nothing of the kind—they are noon and morning effects with full lateral light. Be so kind as to match the color of a leaf in the sun (the darkest you like) as nearly as you can, and bring your matched color and set it beside one of these group of trees, and take a blade of common grass, and set it beside any part of the fullest light of their foregrounds, and then talk about the truth of color of the old masters!

And let not arguments respecting the sublimity or fidelity of *impression* be brought forward here. I have nothing whatever to do with this at present. I am not talking about what is sublime, but about what is true. People attack Turner on this ground;—they never speak of beauty or sublimity with respect to him, but of nature and truth, and let them support their own favorite masters on the same grounds. Perhaps I may have the very deepest veneration for the *feeling* of the old masters, but I must not let it influence me now—my business is to match colors, not to talk sentiment. Neither let it be said that I am going too much into details, and that general truths may be obtained by local falsehood.

purple gray. And this hue of Poussin's clouds would have been perfectly agreeable and allowable, had there been gold or crimson enough in the rest of the picture to have thrown it into gray. It is only because the lower clouds are pure white and blue, and because the trees are of the same color as the clouds, that the cloud color becomes false. There is a fine instance of a sky, green in itself, but turned gray by the opposition of warm color, in Turner's Devonport with the Dockyards.

Truth is only to be measured by close comparison of actual facts; we may talk forever about it in generals, and prove nothing. We cannot tell what effect falsehood may produce on this or that person, but we can very well tell what is false and what is not, and if it produce on our senses the effect of truth, that only demonstrates their imperfection and inaccuracy, and need of cultivation. Turner's color is glaring to one person's sensations, and beautiful to another's. This proves nothing. Poussin's color is right to one, soot to another. This proves nothing. There is no means of arriving at any conclusion but close comparison of both with the known and demonstrable hues of nature, and this comparison will invariably turn Claude or Poussin into blackness, and even Turner into gray.

Whatever depth of gloom may seem to invest the objects of a real landscape, yet a window with that landscape seen through it, will invariably appear a broad space of light as compared with the shade of the room walls; and this single circumstance may prove to us both the intensity and the diffusion of daylight in open air, and the necessity, if a picture is to be truthful in effect of color, that it should tell as a broad space of graduated illumination—not, as do those of the old masters, as a patchwork of black shades. Their works are nature in mourning weeds,—*οὐδ' ἐν ἡλίῳ καθαρῷ τεθραμμένοι, ἀλλ' ὑπὸ συμμιγεῖ σκιᾷ.*

§ 6. Turner's translation of colors.

It is true that there are, here and there, in the Academy pictures, passages in which Turner has translated the unattainable intensity of one tone of color, into the attainable pitch of a higher one: the golden green for instance, of intense sunshine on verdure, into pure yellow, because he knows it to be impossible, with any mixture of blue whatsoever, to give faithfully its relative intensity of light, and Turner always will have his light and shade

right, whatever it costs him in color. But he does this in rare cases, and even then over very small spaces; and I should be obliged to his critics if they would go out to some warm, mossy green bank in full summer sunshine, and try to reach its tone; and when they find, as find they will, Indian yellow and chrome look dark beside it, let them tell me candidly which is nearest truth, the gold of Turner, or the mourning and murky olive browns and verdigris greens in which Claude, with the industry and intelligence of a Sevres china painter, drags the laborious bramble leaves over his childish foreground.

§ 7. Notice of effects in which no brilliancy of art can even approach that of reality.

But it is singular enough that the chief attacks on Turner for overcharged brilliancy, are made, not when there could by any possibility be any chance of his outstepping nature, but when he has taken subjects which no colors of earth could ever vie with or reach, such, for instance, as his sunsets among the high clouds. When I come to speak of skies, I shall point out what divisions, proportioned to their elevation, exist in the character of clouds. It is the highest region,—that exclusively characterized by white, filmy, multitudinous, and quiet clouds, arranged in bars, or streaks, or flakes, of which I speak at present, a region which no landscape painters have ever made one effort to represent, except Rubens and Turner—the latter taking it for his most favorite and frequent study. Now we have been speaking hitherto of what is constant and necessary in nature, of the ordinary effects of daylight on ordinary colors, and we repeat again, that no gorgeousness of the pallet can reach even these. But it is a widely different thing when nature herself takes a coloring fit, and does something extraordinary, something really to exhibit her power. She has a thousand ways and means of rising above herself, but incomparably the noblest manifestations of her capability of color are in these sunsets

among the high clouds. I speak especially of the moment before the sun sinks, when his light turns pure rose-color, and when this light falls upon a zenith covered with countless cloud-forms of inconceivable delicacy, threads and flakes of vapor, which would in common daylight be pure snow white, and which give therefore fair field to the tone of light. There is then no limit to the multitude, and no check to the intensity of the hues assumed. The whole sky from the zenith to the horizon becomes one molten, mantling sea of color and fire; every black bar turns into massy gold, every ripple and wave into unsullied, shadowless, crimson, and purple, and scarlet, and colors for which there are no words in language, and no ideas in the mind,—things which can only be conceived while they are visible,—the intense hollow blue of the upper sky melting through it all,—showing here deep, and pure, and lightless, there, modulated by the filmy, formless body of the transparent vapor till it is lost imperceptibly in its crimson and gold. Now there is no connection, no one link of association or resemblance, between those skies and the work of any mortal hand but Turner's. He alone has followed nature in these her highest efforts; he follows her faithfully, but far behind; follows at such a distance below her intensity that the Napoleon of last year's exhibition, and the Temeraire of the year before, would look colorless and cold if the eye came upon them after one of nature's sunsets among the high clouds. But there are a thousand reasons why this should not be believed. The concurrence of circumstances necessary to produce the sunsets of which I speak does not take place above five or six times in the summer, and then only for a space of from five to ten minutes, just as the sun reaches the horizon. Considering how seldom people think of looking for sunset at all, and how

§ 8. Reasons for the usual incredulity of the observer with respect to their representation.

seldom, if they do, they are in a position from which it can be fully seen, the chances that their attention should be awake, and their position favorable, during these few flying instants of the year, is almost as nothing. What can the citizen, who can see only the red light on the canvas of the wagon at the end of the street, and the crimson color of the bricks of his neighbor's chimney, know of the flood of fire which deluges the sky from the horizon to the zenith? What can even the quiet inhabitant of the English lowlands, whose scene for the manifestation of the fire of heaven is limited to the tops of hayricks, and the rooks' nests in the old elm-trees, know of the mighty passages of splendor which are tossed from Alp to Alp over the azure of a thousand miles of champaign? Even granting the constant vigor of observation, and supposing the possession of such impossible knowledge, it needs but a moment's reflection to prove how incapable the memory is of retaining for any time the distinct image of the sources even of its most vivid impressions. What recollection have we of the sunsets which delighted us last year? We may know that they were magnificent, or glowing, but no distinct image of color or form is retained—nothing of whose *degree* (for the great difficulty with the memory is to retain, not facts, but *degrees* of fact) we could be so certain as to say of anything now presented to us, that it is like it. If we did say so, we should be wrong; for we may be quite certain that the energy of an impression fades from the memory, and becomes more and more indistinct every day; and thus we compare a faded and indistinct image with the decision and certainty of one present to the senses. How constantly do we affirm that the thunder-storm of last week was the most terrible one we ever saw in our lives, because we compare it, not with the thunder-storm of last year, but with the faded and feeble recollection of it. And so, when we enter an

exhibition, as we have no definite standard of truth before us, our feelings are toned down and subdued to the quietness of color which is all that human power can ordinarily attain to; and when we turn to a piece of higher and closer truth, approaching the pitch of the color of nature, but to which we are not guided, as we should be in nature, by corresponding gradations of light everywhere around us, but which is isolated and cut off suddenly by a frame and a wall, and surrounded by darkness and coldness, what can we expect but that it should surprise and shock the feelings? Suppose, where the Napoleon hung in the Academy last year, there could have been left, instead, an opening in the wall, and through that opening, in the midst of the obscurity of the dim room and the smoke-laden atmosphere, there could suddenly have been poured the full glory of a tropical sunset, reverberated from the sea: How would you have shrunk, blinded, from its scarlet and intolerable lightnings! What picture in the room would not have been blackness after it? And why then do you blame Turner because he dazzles you? Does not the falsehood rest with those who do *not?* There was not one hue in this whole picture which was not far below what nature would have used in the same circumstances, nor was there one inharmonious or at variance with the rest;—the stormy blood-red of the horizon, the scarlet of the breaking sunlight, the rich crimson browns of the wet and illumined sea-weed; the pure gold and purple of the upper sky, and, shed through it all, the deep passage of solemn blue, where the cold moonlight fell on one pensive spot of the limitless shore—all were given with harmony as perfect as their color was intense; and if, instead of passing, as I doubt not you did, in the hurry of your unreflecting prejudice, you had paused but so much as one quarter of an hour before the picture, you would have found the

§ 9. Color of the Napoleon.

sense of air and space blended with every line, and breathing in every cloud, and every color instinct and radiant with visible, glowing, absorbing light.

§ 10. Necessary discrepancy between the attainable brilliancy of color and light.

It is to be observed, however, in general, that wherever in brilliant effects of this kind, we approach to anything like a true statement of nature's color, there must yet be a distinct difference in the impression we convey, because we cannot approach her *light*. All such hues are usually given by her with an accompanying intensity of sunbeams which dazzles and overpowers the eye, so that it cannot rest on the actual colors, nor understand what they are; and hence in art, in rendering all effects of this kind, there must be a want of the ideas of *imitation*, which are the great source of enjoyment to the ordinary observer; because we can only give one series of truths, those of color, and are unable to give the accompanying truths of light, so that the more true we are in color, the greater, ordinarily, will be the discrepancy felt between the intensity of hue and the feebleness of light. But the painter who really loves nature will not, on this account, give you a faded and feeble image, which indeed may appear to you to be right, because your feelings can detect no discrepancy in its parts, but which he knows to derive its apparent truth from a systematized falsehood. No; he will make you understand and feel that art *cannot* imitate nature—that where it appears to do so, it must malign her, and mock her. He will give you, or state to you, such truths as are in his power, completely and perfectly; and those which he cannot give, he will leave to your imagination. If you are acquainted with nature, you will know all he has given to be true, and you will supply from your memory and from your heart that life which he cannot give. If you are unacquainted with nature, seek elsewhere for whatever may happen to satisfy your feelings;

but do not ask for the truth which you would not acknowledge and could not enjoy.

Nevertheless the aim and struggle of the artist must always be to do away with this discrepancy as far as the powers of art admit, not by lowering his color, but by increasing his light. And it is indeed by this that the works of Turner are peculiarly distinguished from those of all other colorists, by the dazzling intensity, namely, of the light which he sheds through every hue, and which, far more than their brilliant color, is the real source of their overpowering effect upon the eye, an effect so *reasonably* made the subject of perpetual animadversion, as if the sun which they represent were quite a quiet, and subdued, and gentle, and manageable luminary, and never dazzled anybody, under any circumstances whatsoever. I am fond of standing by a bright Turner in the Academy, to listen to the unintentional compliments of the crowd—"What a glaring thing!" "I declare I can't look at it!" "Don't it hurt your eyes?"—expressed as if they were in the constant habit of looking the sun full in the face, with the most perfect comfort and entire facility of vision. It is curious, after hearing people malign some of Turner's noble passages of light, to pass to some really ungrammatical and false picture of the old masters, in which we have color given *without* light. Take, for instance, the landscape attributed to Rubens, No. 175, in the Dulwich Gallery. I never have spoken, and I never will speak of Rubens but with the most reverential feeling; and whatever imperfections in his art may have resulted from his unfortunate want of seriousness and incapability of true passion, his calibre of mind was originally such that I believe the world may see another Titian and another Raffaelle before it sees another Rubens. But I have before alluded to the violent license he occasionally assumes:

§ 11. This discrepancy less in Turner than in other colorists.

§ 12. Its great extent in a landscape attributed to Rubens.

and there is an instance of it in this picture apposite to the immediate question. The sudden streak and circle of yellow and crimson in the middle of the sky of that picture, being the occurrence of a fragment of a sunset color in pure daylight, and in perfect isolation, while at the same time it is rather darker, when translated into light and shade, than brighter than the rest of the sky, is a case of such bold absurdity, come from whose pencil it may, that if every error which Turner has fallen into in the whole course of his life were concentrated into one, that one would not equal it; and as our connoisseurs gaze upon this with never-ending approbation, we must not be surprised that the accurate perceptions which thus take delight in pure fiction, should consistently be disgusted by Turner's fidelity and truth.

§ 13. Turner scarcely ever uses pure or vivid color.

Hitherto, however, we have been speaking of vividness of pure color, and showing that it is used by Turner only where nature uses it, and in no less degree. But we have hitherto, therefore, been speaking of a most limited and uncharacteristic portion of his works; for Turner, like all great colorists, is distinguished not more for his power of dazzling and overwhelming the eye with intensity of effect, than for his power of doing so by the use of subdued and gentle means. There is no man living more cautious and sparing in the use of pure color than Turner. To say that he never perpetrates anything like the blue excrescences of foreground, or hills *shot* like a housekeeper's best silk gown, with blue and red, which certain of our celebrated artists consider the essence of the sublime, would be but a poor compliment. I might as well praise the portraits of Titian because they have not the grimace and paint of a clown in a pantomime; but I do say, and say with confidence, that there is scarcely a landscape artist of the present day, however sober and lightless their effects may look, who does not employ more pure and raw color than

Turner; and that the ordinary tinsel and trash, or rather vicious and perilous stuff, according to the power of the mind producing it, with which the walls of our Academy are half covered, disgracing, in weak hands, or in more powerful, degrading and corrupting our whole school of art, is based on a system of color beside which Turner's is as Vesta to Cotytto—the chastity of fire to the foulness of earth. Every picture of this great colorist has, in one or two parts of it (key-notes of the whole), points where the system of each individual color is concentrated by a single stroke, as pure as it can come from the pallet; but throughout the great space and extent of even the most brilliant of his works, there will not be found a raw color; that is to say, there is no warmth which has not gray in it, and no blue which has not warmth in it; and the tints in which he most excels and distances all other men, the most cherished and inimitable portions of his color are, as with all perfect colorists they must be, his grays.

It is instructive in this respect, to compare the sky of the Mercury and Argus with the various illustrations of the serenity, space, and sublimity naturally inherent in blue and pink, of which every year's exhibition brings forward enough and to spare. In the Mercury and Argus, the pale and vaporous blue of the heated sky is broken with gray and pearly white, the gold color of the light warming it more or less as it approaches or retires from the sun; but throughout, there is not a grain of pure blue; all is subdued and warmed at the same time by the mingling gray and gold, up to the very zenith, where, breaking through the flaky mist, the transparent and deep azure of the sky is expressed with a single crumbling touch; the key-note of the whole is given, and every part of it passes at once far into glowing and aerial space. The reader can scarcely fail to remember at once sundry works in contradistinction to this, with

great names attached to them, in which the sky is a sheer piece of plumber's and glazier's work, and should be valued per yard, with heavy extra charge for ultramarine.

§ 14. The basis of gray, under all his vivid hues.

Throughout the works of Turner, the same truthful principle of delicate and subdued color is carried out with a care and labor of which it is difficult to form a conception. He gives a dash of pure white for his highest light; but all the other whites of his picture are pearled down with gray or gold. He gives a fold of pure crimson to the drapery of his nearest figure, but all his other crimsons will be deepened with black, or warmed with yellow. In one deep reflection of his distant sea, we catch a trace of the purest blue; but all the rest is palpitating with a varied and delicate gradation of harmonized tint, which indeed looks vivid blue as a mass, but is only so by opposition. It is the most difficult, the most rare thing, to find in his works a definite space, however small, of unconnected color; that is, either of a blue which has nothing to connect it with the warmth, or of a warm color which has nothing to connect it with the grays of the whole; and the result is that there is a general system and under-current of gray pervading the whole of his color, out of which his highest lights, and those local touches of pure color, which are, as I said before, the key-notes of the picture, flash with the peculiar brilliancy and intensity in which he stands alone.

§ 15. The variety and fulness even of his most simple tones.

Intimately associated with this toning down and connection of the colors actually used, is his inimitable power of varying and blending them, so as never to give a quarter of an inch of canvas without a change in it, a melody as well as a harmony of one kind or another. Observe, I am not at present speaking of this as artistical or desirable in itself, not as a characteristic of the great colorist, but as the aim

of the simple follower of nature. For it is strange to see how marvellously nature varies the most general and simple of her tones. A mass of mountain seen against the light may, at first, appear all of one blue; and so it is, blue as a whole, by comparison with other parts of the landscape. But look how that blue is made up. There are black shadows in it under the crags, there are green shadows along the turf, there are gray half-lights upon the rocks, there are faint touches of stealthy warmth and cautious light along their edges; every bush, every stone, every tuft of moss has its voice in the matter, and joins with individual character in the universal will. Who is there who can do this as Turner will? The old masters would have settled the matter at once with a transparent, agreeable, but monotonous gray. Many among the moderns would probably be equally monotonous with absurd and false colors. Turner only would give the uncertainty —the palpitating, perpetual change—the subjection of all to a great influence, without one part or portion being lost or merged in it—the unity of action with infinity of agent. And I wish to insist on this the more particularly, because it is one of the eternal principles of nature, that she will not have one line nor color, nor one portion nor atom of space without a change in it. There is not one of her shadows, tints, or lines that is not in a state of perpetual variation: I do not mean in time, but in space. There is not a leaf in the world which has the *same color* visible over its whole surface; it has a white high light somewhere; and in proportion as it curves to or from that focus, the color is brighter or grayer. Pick up a common flint from the roadside, and count, if you can, its changes and hues of color. Every bit of bare ground under your feet has in it a thousand such—the gray pebbles, the warm ochre, the green of incipient vegetation, the grays and blacks of its reflexes and shadows, might keep a

§ 16. Following the infinite and unapproachable variety of nature.

painter at work for a month, if he were obliged to follow them touch for touch: how much more, when the same infinity of change is carried out with vastness of object and space. The extreme of distance may appear at first monotonous; but the least examination will show it to be full of every kind of change—that its outlines are perpetually melting and appearing again—sharp here, vague there—now lost altogether, now just hinted and still confused among each other—and so forever in a state and necessity of change. Hence, wherever in a painting we have unvaried color extended even over a small space, there is falsehood. Nothing can be natural which is monotonous; nothing true which only tells one story. The brown foreground and rocks of Claude's Sinon before Priam are as false as color can be: first, because there never was such a brown under sunlight, for even the sand and cinders (volcanic tufa) about Naples, granting that he had studied from these ugliest of all formations, are, where they are fresh fractured, golden and lustrous in full light compared to these ideals of crag, and become, like all other rocks, quiet and gray when weathered; and secondly, because no rock that ever nature stained is without its countless breaking tints of varied vegetation. And even Stanfield, master as he is of rock form, is apt in the same way to give us here and there a little bit of mud, instead of stone.

§ 17. His dislike of purple and fondness for the opposition of yellow and black. The principles of nature in this respect.

What I am next about to say with respect to Turner's color, I should wish to be received with caution, as it admits of dispute. I think that the first approach to viciousness of color in any master is commonly indicated chiefly by a prevalence of purple, and an absence of yellow. I think nature mixes yellow with almost every one of her hues, never, or very rarely, using red without it, but frequently using yellow with scarcely any red; and I believe it will be in consequence found

that her favorite opposition, that which generally characterizes and gives tone to her color, is yellow and black, passing, as it retires, into white and blue. It is beyond dispute that the great fundamental opposition of Rubens is yellow and black; and that on this, concentrated in one part of the picture, and modified in various grays throughout, chiefly depend the tones of all his finest works. And in Titian, though there is a far greater tendency to the purple than in Rubens, I believe no red is ever mixed with the pure blue, or glazed over it, which has not in it a modifying quantity of yellow. At all events, I am nearly certain that whatever rich and pure purples are introduced locally, by the great colorists, nothing is so destructive of all fine color as the slightest tendency to purple in general tone; and I am equally certain that Turner is distinguished from all the vicious colorists of the present day, by the foundation of all his tones being black, yellow, and the intermediate grays, while the tendency of our common glare-seekers is invariably to pure, cold, impossible purples. So fond indeed is Turner of black and yellow, that he has given us more than one composition, both drawings and paintings, based on these two colors alone, of which the magnificent Quillebœuf, which I consider one of the most perfect pieces of simple color existing, is a most striking example; and I think that where, as in some of the late Venices, there has been something like a marked appearance of purple tones, even though exquisitely corrected by vivid orange and warm green in the foreground, the general color has not been so perfect or truthful: my own feelings would always guide me rather to the warm grays of such pictures as the Snow Storm, or the glowing scarlet and gold of the Napoleon and Slave Ship. But I do not insist at present on this part of the subject, as being perhaps more proper for future examination, when we are considering the ideal of color.

The above remarks have been made entirely with reference to the recent Academy pictures, which have been chiefly attacked for their color. I by no means intend them to apply to the early works of Turner, those which the enlightened newspaper critics are perpetually talking about as characteristic of a time when Turner was "really great." He is, and was, really great, from the time when he first could hold a brush, but he never was so great as he is now. The Crossing the Brook, glorious as it is as a composition, and perfect in all that is most desirable and most ennobling in art, is scarcely to be looked upon as a piece of color; it is an agreeable, cool, gray rendering of space and form, but it is not color; if it be regarded as such, it is thoroughly false and vapid, and very far inferior to the tones of the same kind given by Claude. The reddish brown in the foreground of the Fall of Carthage, with all diffidence be it spoken, is, as far as my feelings are competent to judge, crude, sunless, and in every way wrong; and both this picture and the Building of Carthage, though this latter is far the finer of the two, are quite unworthy of Turner as a colorist.

§ 18. His early works are false in color.

Not so with the drawings; these, countless as they are, from the earliest to the latest, though presenting an unbroken chain of increasing difficulty overcome, and truth illustrated, are all, according to their aim, equally faultless as to color. Whatever we have hitherto said, applies to them in its fullest extent; though each, being generally the realization of some effect actually seen, and realized but once, requires almost a separate essay. As a class, they are far quieter and chaster than the Academy pictures, and, were they better known, might enable our connoisseurs to form a somewhat more accurate judgment of the intense study of nature on which all Turner's color is based.

§ 19. His drawings invariably perfect.

One point only remains to be noted respecting his system of color generally—its entire subordination to light and shade, a subordination which there is no need to prove here, as every engraving from his works—and few are unengraved—is sufficient demonstration of it. I have before shown the inferiority and unimportance in nature of color, as a truth, compared with light and shade. That inferiority is maintained and asserted by all really great works of color; but most by Turner's as their color is most intense. Whatever brilliancy he may choose to assume, is subjected to an inviolable law of chiaroscuro, from which there is no appeal. No richness nor depth of tint is considered of value enough to atone for the loss of one particle of arranged light. No brilliancy of hue is permitted to interfere with the depth of a determined shadow. And hence it is, that while engravings from works far less splendid in color are often vapid and cold, because the little color employed has not been rightly based on light and shade, an engraving from Turner is always beautiful and forcible in proportion as the color of the original has been intense, and never in a single instance has failed to express the picture as a perfect composition.* Powerful and captivating and faithful as

§ 20. The subjection of his system of color to that of chiaroscuro.

* This is saying too much; for it not unfrequently happens that the light and shade of the original is lost in the engraving, the effect of which is afterwards partially recovered, with the aid of the artist himself, by introductions of new features. Sometimes, when a drawing depends chiefly on color, the engraver gets unavoidably embarrassed, and must be assisted by some change or exaggeration of the effect; but the more frequent case is, that the engraver's difficulties result merely from his inattention to, or wilful deviations from his original; and that the artist is obliged to assist him by such expedients as the error itself suggests.

Not unfrequently in reviewing a plate, as very constantly in reviewing a picture after some time has elapsed since its completion, even the painter is liable to make unnecessary or hurtful changes. In the plate of the Old Temeraire, lately published in Finden's gallery, I do

his color is, it is the least important of all his excellences, because it is the least important feature of nature. He paints in color, but he thinks in light and shade; and

not know whether it was Turner or the engraver who broke up the water into sparkling ripple, but it was a grievous mistake, and has destroyed the whole dignity and value of the conception. The flash of lightning in the Winchelsea of the England series does not exist in the original; it is put in to withdraw the attention of the spectator from the sky, which the engraver destroyed.

There is an unfortunate persuasion among modern engravers that color can be expressed by particular characters of line; and in the endeavor to distinguish by different lines, different colors of equal depth, they frequently lose the whole system of light and shade. It will hardly be credited that the piece of foreground on the left of Turner's Modern Italy, represented in the Art-Union engraving as nearly coal black, is in the original of a pale warm gray, hardly darker than the sky. All attempt to record color in engraving, is heraldry out of its place: the engraver has no power beyond that of expressing transparency or opacity by greater or less openness of line, (for the same depth of tint is producible by lines with very different intervals.)

Texture of surface is only in a measure in the power of the steel, and ought not to be laboriously sought after; nature's surfaces are distinguished more by form than texture: a stone is often smoother than a leaf; but if texture is to be given, let the engraver at least be sure that he knows what the texture of the object actually is, and how to represent it. The leaves in the foreground of the engraved Mercury and Argus have all of them three or four black lines across them. What sort of leaf texture is supposed to be represented by these? The stones in the foreground of Turner's Llanthony received from the artist the powdery texture of sandstone; the engraver covered them with contorted lines and turned them into old timber.

A still more fatal cause of failure is the practice of making out or finishing what the artist left incomplete. In the England plate of Dudley, there are two offensive blank windows in the large building with the chimney on the left. These *are* engraver's improvements; in the original they are barely traceable, their lines being excessively faint and tremulous as with the movement of heated air between them and the spectator: their vulgarity is thus taken away, and the whole building left in one grand unbroken mass. It is almost impossible to break engravers of this unfortunate habit. I have even heard of their taking journeys of some distance in order to obtain knowledge of the details which the artist intentionally omitted; and the evil will necessarily continue until they receive something like legitimate artistical

were it necessary, rather than lose one line of his forms, or one ray of his sunshine, would, I apprehend, be content to paint in black and white to the end of his life. It is by mistaking the shadow for the substance, and aiming at the brilliancy and the fire, without perceiving of what deep studied shade and inimitable form it is at once the result and the illustration, that the host of his imitators sink into deserved disgrace. With him, as with all the greatest painters, and in Turner's more than all, the hue is a beautiful auxiliary in working out the great impression to be conveyed, but is not the source nor the essence of that impression; it is little more than a visible melody, given to raise and assist the mind in the reception of nobler ideas—as sacred passages of sweet sound, to prepare the feelings for the reading of the mysteries of God.

education. In one or two instances, however, especially in small plates, they have shown great feeling; the plates of Miller (especially those of the Turner illustrations to Scott) are in most instances perfect and beautiful interpretations of the originals; so those of Goodall in Rogers's works, and Cousens's in the Rivers of France; those of the Yorkshire series are also very valuable, though singularly inferior to the drawings. But none even of these men appear capable of producing a large plate. They have no knowledge of the means of rendering their lines vital or valuable; cross-hatching stands for everything; and inexcusably, for though we cannot expect every engraver to etch like Rembrandt or Albert Durer, or every wood-cutter to draw like Titian, at least something of the system and power of the grand works of those men might be preserved, and some mind and meaning stolen into the reticulation of the restless modern lines.

CHAPTER III.

OF TRUTH OF CHIAROSCURO.

§ 1. We are not at present to examine particular effects of light.

It is not my intention to enter, in the present portion of the work, upon any examination of Turner's particular effects of light. We must know something about what is beautiful before we speak of these.

At present I wish only to insist upon two great principles of chiaroscuro, which are observed throughout the works of the great modern master, and set at defiance by the ancients—great general laws, which may, or may not, be sources of beauty, but whose observance is indisputably necessary to truth.

Go out some bright sunny day in winter, and look for a tree with a broad trunk, having rather delicate boughs hanging down on the sunny side, near the trunk. Stand four or five yards from it, with your back to the sun. You will find that the boughs between you and the trunk of the tree are very indistinct, that you confound them in places with the trunk itself, and cannot possibly trace one of them from its insertion to its extremity. But the shadows which they cast upon the trunk, you will find clear, dark, and distinct, perfectly traceable through their whole course, except when they are interrupted by the crossing boughs. And if you retire backwards, you will come to a point where you cannot see the intervening boughs at all, or only a fragment of them here and there, but can still see their shadows perfectly plain. Now, this may serve to show you the immense prominence and

importance of shadows where there is anything like bright light. They are, in fact, commonly far more conspicuous than the thing which casts them, for being as as large as the casting object, and altogether made up of a blackness deeper than the darkest part of the casting object, (while that object is also broken up with positive and reflected lights,) their large, broad, unbroken spaces, tell strongly on the eye, especially as all form is rendered partially, often totally invisible within them, and as they are suddenly terminated by the sharpest lines which nature ever shows. For no outline of objects whatsoever is so sharp as the edge of a close shadow. Put your finger over a piece of white paper in the sun, and observe the difference between the softness of the outline of the finger itself and the decision of the edge of the shadow. And note also the excessive gloom of the latter. A piece of black cloth, laid in the light, will not attain one-fourth of the blackness of the paper under the shadow.

§ 2. And therefore the distinctness of shadows is the chief means of expressing vividness of light.

Hence shadows are in reality, when the sun is shining, the most conspicuous thing in a landscape, next to the highest lights. All forms are understood and explained chiefly by their agency: the roughness of the bark of a tree, for instance, is not seen in the light, nor in the shade; it is only seen between the two, where the shadows of the ridges explain it. And hence, if we have to express vivid light, our very first aim must be to get the shadows sharp and visible; and this is not to be done by blackness, (though indeed chalk on white paper is the only thing which comes up to the intensity of real shadows,) but by keeping them perfectly flat, keen, and even. A very pale shadow, if it be quite flat—if it conceal the details of the objects it crosses—if it be gray and cold compared to their color, and very sharp edged, will be far more conspicuous, and make everything out

of it look a great deal more like sunlight, than a shadow ten times its depth, shaded off at the edge, and confounded with the color of the objects on which it falls. Now the old masters of the Italian school, in almost all their works, directly reverse this principle: they blacken their shadows till the picture becomes quite appalling, and everything in it invisible; but they make a point of losing their edges, and carrying them off by gradation; in consequence utterly destroying every appearance of sunlight. All their shadows are the faint, secondary darknesses of mere *daylight;* the sun has nothing whatever to do with them. The shadow between the pages of the book which you hold in your hand is distinct and visible enough, (though you are, I suppose, reading it by the ordinary daylight of your room,) out of the sun; and this weak and secondary shadow is all that we ever find in the Italian masters, as indicative of sunshine. Even Cuyp and Berghem, though they know thoroughly well what they are about in their foregrounds, forget the principle in their distances; and though in Claude's seaports, where he has plain architecture to deal with, he gives us something like real shadows along the stones, the moment we come to ground and foliage with lateral light, away go the shadows and the sun together. In the Marriage of Isaac and Rebecca, in our own gallery, the trunks of the trees between the water-wheel and the white figure in the middle distance are dark and visible; but their shadows are scarcely discernible on the ground, and are quite vague and lost in the building. In nature, every bit of the shadow would have been darker than the darkest part of the trunks, and both on the ground and building would have been defined and conspicuous; while the trunks themselves would have been faint, confused, and indistinguishable, in their illumined parts, from the grass

§ 3. Total absence of such distinctness in the works of the Italian school.

§ 4. And partial absence in the Dutch.

or distance. So in Poussin's Phocion, the shadow of the stick on the stone in the right-hand corner, is shaded off and lost, while you see the stick plain all the way. In nature's sunlight it would have been the direct reverse —you would have seen the shadow black and sharp all the way down, but you would have had to look for the stick, which in all probability would in several places have been confused with the stone behind it.

And so throughout the works of Claude, Poussin, and Salvator, we shall find, especially in their conventional foliage, and unarticulated barbarisms of rock, that their whole sum and substance of chiaroscuro is merely the gradation and variation which nature gives in the *body* of her shadows, and that all which they do to express sunshine, she does to vary shade. They take only one step, while she always takes two; marking, in the first place, with violent decision, the great transition from sun to shade, and then varying the shade itself with a thousand gentle gradations and double shadows, in themselves equivalent, and more than equivalent, to all that the old masters did for their entire chiaroscuro.

§5. The perfection of Turner's works in this respect.

Now if there be one principle, or secret more than another, on which Turner depends for attaining brilliancy of light, it is his clear and exquisite drawing of the *shadows*. Whatever is obscure, misty, or undefined in his objects or his atmosphere, he takes care that the shadows be sharp and clear—and then he knows that the light will take care of itself, and he makes them clear, not by blackness, but by excessive evenness, unity, and sharpness of edge. He will keep them clear and distinct, and make them felt as shadows, though they are so faint, that, but for their decisive forms, we should not have observed them for darkness at all. He will throw them one after another like transparent veils, along the earth and upon the air, till the whole picture palpitates with them, and yet the

darkest of them will be a faint gray, imbued and penetrated with light. The pavement on the left of the Hero and Leander, is about the most thorough piece of this kind of sorcery that I remember in art; but of the general principle, not one of his works is without constant evidence. Take the vignette of the garden opposite the title-page of Rogers's Poems, and note the drawing of the nearest balustrade on the right. The balusters themselves are faint and misty, and the light through them feeble; but the shadows of them are sharp and dark, and the intervening light as intense as it can be left. And see how much more distinct the shadow of the running figure is on the pavement, than the checkers of the pavement itself. Observe the shadows on the trunk of the tree at page 91, how they conquer all the details of the trunk itself, and become darker and more conspicuous than any part of the boughs or limbs, and so in the vignette to Campbell's Beechtree's Petition. Take the beautiful concentration of all that is most characteristic of Italy as she is, at page 168 of Rogers's Italy, where we have the long shadows of the trunks made by far the most conspicuous thing in the whole foreground, and hear how Wordsworth, the keenest-eyed of all modern poets for what is deep and essential in nature, illustrates Turner here, as we shall find him doing in all other points.

> "At the root
> Of that tall pine, the shadow of whose bare
> And slender stem, while here I sit at eve,
> Oft stretches tow'rds me, like a long straight path,
> Traced faintly in the greensward."
>
> EXCURSION, BOOK VI.

So again in the Rhymer's Glen, (Illustrations to Scott,) note the intertwining of the shadows across the path, and the checkering of the trunks by them; and again on the bridge in the Armstrong's Tower; and yet more in

the long avenue of Brienne, where we have a length of two or three miles expressed by the playing shadows alone, and the whole picture filled with sunshine by the long lines of darkness cast by the figures on the snow. The Hampton Court in the England series, is another very striking instance. In fact, the general system of execution observable in all Turner's drawings, is to work his grounds richly and fully, sometimes stippling, and giving infinity of delicate, mysterious, and ceaseless detail; and on the ground so prepared to cast his shadows with one dash of the brush, leaving an excessively sharp edge of watery color. Such at least is commonly the case in such coarse and broad instances as those I have above given. Words are not accurate enough, nor delicate enough to express or trace the constant, all-pervading influence of the finer and vaguer shadows throughout his works, that thrilling influence which gives to the light they leave, its passion and its power. There is not a stone, not a leaf, not a cloud, over which light is not felt to be actually passing and palpitating before our eyes. There is the motion, the actual wave and radiation of the darted beam—not the dull universal daylight, which falls on the landscape without life, or direction, or speculation, equal on all things and dead on all things; but the breathing, animated, exulting light, which feels, and receives, and rejoices, and acts—which chooses one thing and rejects another—which seeks, and finds, and loses again—leaping from rock to rock, from leaf to leaf, from wave to wave,—glowing, or flashing, or scintillating, according to what it strikes, or in its holier moods, absorbing and enfolding all things in the deep fulness of its repose, and then again losing itself in bewilderment, and doubt, and dimness; or perishing and passing away, entangled in drifting mist, or melted into melancholy air, but still,—kindling, or declining, sparkling or still,

§ 6. The effect of his shadows upon the light.

it is the living light, which breathes in its deepest, most entranced rest, which sleeps, but never dies.

§ 7. The distinction holds good between almost all the works of the ancient and modern schools.

I need scarcely insist farther on the marked distinction between the works of the old masters and those of the great modern landscape-painters in this respect. It is one which the reader can perfectly well work out for himself, by the slightest systematic attention,—one which he will find existing, not merely between this work and that, but throughout the whole body of their productions, and down to every leaf and line. And a little careful watching of nature, especially in her foliage and foregrounds, and comparison of her with Claude, Gaspar Poussin, and Salvator, will soon show him that those artists worked entirely on conventional principles, not representing what they saw, but what they thought would make a handsome picture; and even when they went to nature, which I believe to have been a very much rarer practice with them than their biographers would have us suppose, they copied her like children, drawing what they knew to be there, but not what they saw there.* I believe you may search the foregrounds of Claude, from one end of Europe to another, and you will not find the shadow of one leaf cast upon another. You will find leaf after leaf painted more or less boldly or brightly out of the black ground, and you will find dark leaves defined in perfect form upon the light; but you will not find the form of a single leaf disguised or interrupted by the shadow of another. And Poussin and Salvator are still farther from anything like genuine truth. There is nothing in their pictures which might not be manufactured in their painting-room, with a branch or two of brambles and a bunch or two of weeds before them, to give them the form of the leaves. And it is refreshing to turn from their ignorant and impotent

* Compare Sect. II. Chap. II. § 6.

repetitions of childish conception, to the clear, close, genuine studies of modern artists; for it is not Turner only, (though here, as in all other points, the first), who is remarkable for fine and expressive decision of chiaroscuro. Some passages by J. D. Harding are thoroughly admirable in this respect, though this master is getting a little too much into a habit of general keen execution, which prevents the parts which ought to be especially decisive from being felt as such and which makes his pictures, especially the large ones, look a little thin. But some of his later passages of rock foreground have, taken in the abstract, been beyond all praise, owing to the exquisite forms and firm expressiveness of their shadows. And the chiaroscuro of Stanfield is equally deserving of the most attentive study.

§ 8. Second great principle of chiaroscuro. Both high light and deep shadow are used in equal quantity and only in points.

The second point to which I wish at present to direct attention has reference to the *arrangement* of light and shade. It is the constant habit of nature to use both her highest lights and deepest shadows in exceedingly small quantity; always in points, never in masses. She will give a large mass of tender light in sky or water, impressive by its quantity, and a large mass of tender shadow relieved against it, in foliage, or hill, or building; but the light is always subdued if it be extensive—the shadow always feeble if it be broad. She will then fill up all the rest of her picture with middle tints and pale grays of some sort or another, and on this quiet and harmonious whole, she will touch her high lights in spots—the foam of an isolated wave—the sail of a solitary vessel—the flash of the sun from a wet roof—the gleam of a single whitewashed cottage—or some such sources of local brilliancy, she will use so vividly and delicately as to throw everything else into definite shade by comparison. And then taking up the gloom, she will use the black hollows of some overhanging bank, or the

black dress of some shaded figure, or the depth of some sunless chink of wall or window, so sharply as to throw everything else into definite light by comparison; thus reducing the whole mass of her picture to a delicate middle tint, approaching, of course, here to light, and there to gloom; but yet sharply separated from the utmost degrees either of the one or the other.

§ 9. Neglect or contradiction of this principle by writers on art.

Now it is a curious thing that none of our writers on art seem to have noticed the great principle of nature in this respect. They all talk of deep shadow as a thing that may be given in quantity,—one-fourth of the picture, or, in certain effects, much more. Barry, for instance, says that the practice of the great painters, who "best understood the effects of chiaroscuro," was, for the most part, to make the mass of middle tint larger than the light, and the mass of dark larger than the masses of light and middle tint together, *i.e.*, occupying more than one-half of the picture. Now I do not know what we are to suppose is meant by "understanding chiaroscuro." If it means being able to manufacture agreeable patterns in the shape of pyramids, and crosses, and zigzags, into which arms and legs are to be persuaded, and passion and motion arranged, for the promotion and encouragement of the cant of criticism, such a principle may be productive of the most advantageous results. But if it means, being acquainted with the deep, perpetual, systematic, unintrusive simplicity and unwearied variety of nature's chiaroscuro—if it means the perception that blackness and sublimity are not synonymous, and that space and light may possibly be coadjutors—then no man, who ever advocated or dreamed of such a principle, is anything more than a novice, blunderer, and trickster in chiaroscuro. And my firm belief is, that though color is inveighed against by all artists, as the great Circe of

§ 10. And consequent misguiding of the student.

art—the great transformer of mind into sensuality—no fondness for it, no study of it, is half so great a peril and stumbling-block to the young student, as the admiration he hears bestowed on such artificial, false, and juggling chiaroscuro, and the instruction he receives, based on such principles as that given us by Fuseli—that "mere natural light and shade, however separately or individually true, is not always legitimate chiaroscuro in art." It may not always be *agreeable* to a sophisticated, unfeeling, and perverted mind; but the student had better throw up his art at once, than proceed on the conviction that any other can ever be *legitimate*. I believe I shall be perfectly well able to prove, in following parts of the work, that "mere natural light and shade" is the only fit and faithful attendant of the highest art; and that all tricks—all visible, intended arrangement—all extended shadows and narrow lights—everything in fact, in the least degree artificial, or tending to make the mind dwell upon light and shade as such, is an injury, instead of an aid, to conceptions of high ideal dignity. I believe I shall be able also to show, that nature manages her chiaroscuro a great deal more neatly and cleverly than people fancy;—that "mere natural light and shade" is a very much finer thing than most artists can put together, and that none think they can improve upon it but those who never understood it.

§ 11. The great value of a simple chiaroscuro.

But however this may be, it is beyond dispute that every permission given to the student to amuse himself with painting one figure all black, and the next all white, and throwing them out with a background of nothing—every permission given to him to spoil his pocketbook with sixths of sunshine and sevenths of shade, and other such fractional sublimities, is so much more difficulty laid in the way of his ever becoming a master; and that none are in the right road to real excellence, but those who are

struggling to render the simplicity, purity, and inexhaustible variety of nature's own chiaroscuro in open, cloudless daylight, giving the expanse of harmonious light—the speaking, decisive shadow—and the exquisite grace, tenderness, and grandeur of aerial opposition of local color and equally illuminated lines. No chiaroscuro is so difficult as this; and none so noble, chaste, or impressive. On this part of the subject, however, I must not enlarge at present. I wish now only to speak of those great principles of chiaroscuro, which nature observes, even when she is most working for effect—when she is playing with thunderclouds and sunbeams, and throwing one thing out and obscuring another, with the most marked artistical feeling and intention;—even then, she never forgets her great rule, to give precisely the same quantity of deepest shade which she does of highest light, and no more; points of the one answering to points of the other, and both vividly conspicuous and separated from all the rest of the landscape.

§ 12. The sharp separation of nature's lights from her middle tint.

And it is most singular that this separation, which is the great source of brilliancy in nature, should not only be unobserved, but absolutely forbidden by our great writers on art, who are always talking about connecting the light with the shade by *imperceptible gradations*. Now so surely as this is done, all sunshine is lost, for imperceptible gradation from light to dark is the characteristic of objects seen out of sunshine, in what is, in landscape, shadow. Nature's principle of getting light is the direct reverse. She will cover her whole landscape with middle tint, in which she will have as many gradations as you please, and a great many more than you can paint; but on this middle tint she touches her extreme lights, and extreme darks, isolated and sharp, so that the eye goes to them directly, and feels them to be key-notes of the whole composition. And although the dark

touches are less attractive than the light ones, it is not because they are less distinct, but because they exhibit nothing; while the bright touches are in parts where everything is seen, and where in consequence the eye goes to rest. But yet the high lights do not exhibit anything in themselves, they are too bright and dazzle the eye; and having no shadows in them, cannot exhibit form, for form can only be seen by shadow of some kind or another. Hence the highest lights and deepest darks agree in this, that nothing is seen in either of them; that both are in exceedingly small quantity, and both are marked and distinct from the middle tones of the landscape—the one by their brilliancy, the other by their sharp edges, even though many of the more energetic middle tints may approach their intensity very closely.

§ 13. The truth of Turner.

I need scarcely do more than tell you to glance at any one of the works of Turner, and you will perceive in a moment the exquisite observation of all these principles; the sharpness, decision, conspicuousness, and excessively small quantity, both of extreme light and extreme shade, all the mass of the picture being graduated and delicate middle tint. Take up the Rivers of France, for instance, and turn over a few of the plates in succession.

1. Chateau Gaillard (vignette.)—Black figures and boats, points of shade; sun-touches on castle, and wake of boat, of light. See how the eye rests on both, and observe how sharp and separate all the lights are, falling in spots, edged by shadow, but not melting off into it.

2. Orleans.—The crowded figures supply both points of shade and light. Observe the delicate middle tint of both in the whole mass of buildings, and compare this with the blackness of Canaletto's shadows, against which neither figures nor anything else can ever tell, as points of shade.

3. Blois.—White figures in boats, buttresses of bridge,

dome of church on the right, for light; woman on horseback, heads of boats, for shadow. Note especially the isolation of the light on the church dome.

4. Chateau de Blois.—Torches and white figures for light, roof of chapel and monks' dresses for shade.

5. Beaugency.—Sails and spire opposed to buoy and boats. An exquisite instance of brilliant, sparkling, isolated touches of morning light.

6. Amboise.—White sail and clouds; cypresses under castle.

7. Chauteau of Amboise.—The boat in the centre, with its reflections, needs no comment. Note the glancing lights under the bridge. This is a very glorious and perfect instance.

8. St. Julien, Tours.—Especially remarkable for its preservation of deep points of gloom, because the whole picture is one of extended shade.

I need scarcely go on. The above instances are taken as they happen to come, without selection. The reader can proceed for himself. I may, however, name a few cases of chiaroscuro more especially deserving of his study. Scene between Quillebœuf and Villequier,—Honfleur,—Light Towers of the Héve,—On the Seine between Mantes and Vernon,—The Lantern at St. Cloud,—Confluence of Seine and Marne,—Troyes,—the first and last vignette, and those at pages 36, 63, 95, 184, 192, 203, of Rogers's poems; the first and second in Campbell, St. Maurice in the Italy, where note the black stork; Brienne, Skiddaw, Maybrugh, Melrose, Jedburgh, in the illustrations to Scott, and the vignettes to Milton, not because these are one whit superior to others of his works, but because the laws of which we have been speaking are more strikingly developed in them, and because they have been well engraved. It is impossible to reason from the larger plates, in which half the chiaroscuro is totally destroyed by the haggling, blackening, and "making out" of the engravers.

CHAPTER IV.

OF TRUTH OF SPACE:—FIRST, AS DEPENDENT ON THE FOCUS OF THE EYE.*

In the first chapter of this section I noticed the distinction between real aerial perspective, and that overcharged contrast of light and shade by which the old masters obtained their deceptive effect; and I showed that, though inferior to them in the precise quality or tone of aerial color, our great modern master is altogether more truthful in the expression of the proportionate relation of all his distances to one another. I am now about to examine those modes of expressing space, both in nature and art by far the most important, which are dependent, not on the relative hues of objects, but on the *drawing* of them: by far the most important, I say, because the most constant and certain; for nature herself is not always aerial. Local effects are frequent which interrupt and violate the laws of aerial tone, and induce strange deception in our ideas of distance. I have often seen the summit of a snowy mountain look nearer than its base, owing to the

§ 1. Space is more clearly indicated by the drawing of objects than by their hue.

* I have left this chapter in its original place, because I am more than ever convinced of the truth of the position advanced in the 8th paragraph; nor can I at present assign any other cause, than that here given, for what is there asserted; and yet I cannot but think that I have allowed far too much influence to a change so slight as that which we insensibly make in the focus of the eye; and that the real justification of Turner's practice, with respect to some of his foregrounds, is to be elsewhere sought. I leave the subject, therefore, to the reader's consideration.

perfect clearness of the upper air. But the *drawing* of objects, that is to say, the degree in which their details and parts are distinct or confused, is an unfailing and certain criterion of their distance; and if this be rightly rendered in a painting, we shall have genuine truth of space, in spite of many errors in aerial tone; while, if this be neglected, all space will be destroyed, whatever dexterity of tint may be employed to conceal the defective drawing.

§ 2. It is impossible to see objects at unequal distances distinctly at one moment.

First, then, it is to be noticed, that the eye, like any other lens, must have its focus altered, in order to convey a distinct image of objects at different distances; so that it is totally impossible to see distinctly, at the same moment, two objects, one of which is much farther off than another. Of this anyone may convince himself in an instant. Look at the bars of your window-frame, so as to get a clear image of their lines and form, and you cannot, while your eye is fixed on them, perceive anything but the most indistinct and shadowy images of whatever objects may be visible beyond. But fix your eyes on those objects, so as to see them clearly, and though they are just beyond and apparently beside the window-frame, that frame will only be felt or seen as a vague, flitting, obscure interruption to whatever is perceived beyond it. A little attention directed to this fact will convince every one of its universality, and prove beyond dispute that objects at unequal distances cannot be seen together, not from the intervention of air or mist, but from the impossibility of the rays proceeding from both, converging to the same focus, so that the whole impression, either of one or the other, must necessarily be confused, indistinct, and inadequate.

But, be it observed (and I have only to request that whatever I say may be tested by immediate experiment), the difference of focus necessary is greatest within the

first five hundred yards, and therefore, though it is totally impossible to see an object ten yards from the eye, and one a quarter of a mile beyond it, at the same moment, it is perfectly possible to see one a quarter of a mile off, and one five miles beyond it, at the same moment. The consequence of this is, practically, that in a real landscape, we can see the whole of what would be called the middle distance and distance together, with facility and clearness; but while we do so we can see nothing in the foreground beyond a vague and indistinct arrangement of lines and colors; and that if, on the contrary, we look at any foreground object, so as to receive a distinct impression of it, the distance and middle distance become all disorder and mystery.

§ 3. Especially such as are both comparatively near.

And therefore, if in a painting our foreground is anything, our distance must be nothing, and *vice versa;* for if we represent our near and distant objects as giving both at once that distinct image to the eye, which we receive in nature from each, when we look at them separately;* and if we distinguish them from each other

§ 4. In painting, therefore, either the foreground or distance must be partially sacrificed.

* This incapacity of the eye must not be confounded with its incapability to comprehend a large portion of *lateral* space at once. We indeed can see, at any one moment, little more than one point, the objects beside it being confused and indistinct; but we need pay no attention to this in art, because we can see just as little of the picture as we can of the landscape without turning the eye, and hence any slurring or confusing of one part of it, laterally, more than another, is not founded on any truth of nature, but is an expedient of the artist—and often an excellent and desirable one—to make the eye rest where he wishes it. But as the touch expressive of a distant object is as near upon the canvas as that expressive of a near one, both are seen distinctly and with the same focus of the eye, and hence an immediate contradiction of nature results, unless one or other be given with an artificial and increased indistinctness, expressive of the appearance peculiar to the unadapted focus. On the other hand, it must be noted that the greater part of the effect above described is consequent not on vari-

only by the air-tone; and indistinctness dependent on positive distance, we violate one of the most essential principles of nature; we represent that as seen at once which can only be seen by two separate acts of seeing, and tell a falsehood as gross as if we had represented four sides of a cubic object visible together.

§ 5. Which not being done by the old masters, they could not express space.

Now, to this fact and principle, no landscape painter of the old school, as far as I remember, ever paid the slightest attention. Finishing their foregrounds clearly and sharply, and with vigorous impression on the eye, giving even the leaves of their bushes and grass with perfect edge and shape, they proceeded into the distance with equal attention to what they could see of its details —they gave all that the eye can perceive in a distance, when it is fully and entirely devoted to it, and therefore, though masters of aerial tone, though employing every expedient that art could supply to conceal the intersection of lines, though caricaturing the force and shadow of near objects to throw them close upon the eye, they *never* succeeded in truly representing space. Turner introduced a new era in landscape art, by showing that the foreground might be sunk for the distance, and that it was possible to express immediate proximity to the spectator, without giving anything like completeness to the forms of the near objects. This is not done by slurred or soft lines, observe, (always the sign of vice in art,) but by a decisive imperfection, a firm, but partial assertion of form, which the eye feels indeed to be close home to it, and yet cannot rest upon, or cling to, nor entirely understand, and from which it is driven away of necessity, to those parts of distance on which it is intended to repose. And this principle, originated by

§ 6. But modern artists have succeeded in fully carrying out this principle.

ation of focus, but on the different angle at which near objects are seen by each of the two eyes, when both are directed towards the distance.

Turner, though fully carried out by him only, has yet been acted on with judgment and success by several less powerful artists of the English school. Some six years ago, the brown moorland foregrounds of Copley Fielding were very instructive in this respect. Not a line in them was made out, not a single object clearly distinguishable. Wet broad sweeps of the brush, sparkling, careless, and accidental as nature herself, always truthful as far as they went, implying knowledge, though not expressing it, suggested everything, while they represented nothing. But far off into the mountain distance came the sharp edge and the delicate form; the whole intention and execution of the picture being guided and exerted where the great impression of space and size was to be given. The spectator was compelled to go forward into the waste of hills—there, where the sun broke wild upon the moor, he must walk and wander—he could not stumble and hesitate over the near rocks, nor stop to botanize on the first inches of his path.* And the impression of these pictures was always great and enduring, as it was simple and truthful. I do not know anything in art which has expressed more completely the force and feeling of nature in these particular scenes. And it is a farther illustration† of the principle we are insisting upon, that where, as in some of his later works, he has bestowed more labor on the foreground, the picture has lost both in space and sublimity. And among artists in general, who are either not aware of the principle, or fear to act upon it, (for it requires no small

* There is no inconsistency, observe, between this passage and what was before asserted respecting the necessity of botanical fidelity—where the foreground is the object of attention. Compare Part II. Sec. I. Chap. VII. § 10:—"To paint mist rightly, space rightly, and light rightly, it may be often necessary to paint *nothing else* rightly."

† Hardly. It would have been so only had the recently finished foregrounds been as accurate in detail as they are abundant: they are painful, I believe, not from their finish, but their falseness.

courage, as well as skill, to treat a foreground with that indistinctness and mystery which they have been accustomed to consider as characteristic of distance,) the foreground is not only felt, as every landscape painter will confess, to be the most embarrassing and unmanageable part of the picture, but, in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred, will go near to destroy the effect of the rest of the composition. Thus Callcott's Trent is severely injured by the harsh group of foreground figures; and Stanfield very rarely gets through an Academy picture without destroying much of its space, by too much determination of near form; while Harding constantly sacrifices his distance, and compels the spectator to dwell on the foreground altogether, though indeed, with such foregrounds as he gives us, we are most happy so to do. But it is

§ 7. Especially of Turner.

in Turner only that we see a bold and decisive choice of the distance and middle distance, as his great object of attention; and by him only that the foreground is united and adapted to it, not by any want of drawing, or coarseness, or carelessness of execution, but by the most precise and beautiful indication or suggestion of just so much of even the minutest forms as the eye can see when its focus is not adapted to them. And herein is another reason for the vigor and wholeness of the effect of Turner's works at any distance; while those of almost all other artists are sure to lose space as soon as we lose sight of the details.

§ 8. Justification of the want of drawing in Turner's figures.

And now we see the reason for the singular, and to the ignorant in art, the offensive execution of Turner's figures. I do not mean to assert that there is any reason whatsoever, for *bad* drawing, (though in landscape it matters exceedingly little;) but that there is both reason and necessity for that *want* of drawing which gives even the nearest figures round balls with four pink spots in them in-

stead of faces, and four dashes of the brush instead of hands and feet; for it is totally impossible that if the eye be adapted to receive the rays proceeding from the utmost distance, and some partial impression from all the distances, it should be capable of perceiving more of the forms and features of near figures than Turner gives. And how absolutely necessary to the faithful representation of space this indecision really is, might be proved with the utmost ease by any one who had veneration enough for the artist to sacrifice one of his pictures to his fame; who would take some one of his works in which the figures were most incomplete, and have them painted in by any of our delicate and first-rate figure painters, absolutely preserving every color and shade of Turner's group, so as not to lose one atom of the composition, but giving eyes for the pink spots, and feet for the white ones. Let the picture be so exhibited in the Academy, and even novices in art would feel at a glance that its truth of space was gone, that every one of its beauties and harmonies had undergone decomposition, that it was now a grammatical solecism, a painting of impossibilities, a thing to torture the eye, and offend the mind.

CHAPTER V.

OF TRUTH OF SPACE:—SECONDLY, AS ITS APPEARANCE IS DEPENDENT ON THE POWER OF THE EYE.

In the last chapter, we have seen how indistinctness of individual distances becomes necessary in order to express the adaptation of the eye to one or other of them; we have now to examine that kind of indistinctness which is dependent on real retirement of the object even when the focus of the eye is fully concentrated upon it. The first kind of indecision is that which belongs to all objects which the eye is not adapted to, whether near or far off: the second is that consequent upon the want of power in the eye to receive a clear image of objects at a great distance from it, however attentively it may regard them.

§ 1. The peculiar indistinctness dependent on the retirement of objects from the eye.

Draw on a piece of white paper, a square and a circle, each about a twelfth or eighth of an inch in diameter, and blacken them so that their forms may be very distinct; place your paper against the wall at the end of the room, and retire from it a greater or less distance according as you have drawn the figures larger or smaller. You will come to a point where, though you can see both the spots with perfect plainness, you cannot tell which is the square and which the circle.

Now this takes place of course with every object in a landscape, in proportion to its distance and size. The definite forms of the leaves of a tree, however sharply and separately they may appear to come against the sky,

are quite indistinguishable at fifty yards off, and the form of everything becomes confused before we finally lose sight of it. Now if the character of an object, say the front of a house, be explained by a variety of forms in it, as the shadows in the tops of the windows, the lines of the architraves, the seams of the masonry, etc.; these lesser details, as the object falls into distance, become confused and undecided, each of them losing their definite forms, but all being perfectly visible as something, a white or a dark spot or stroke, not lost sight of, observe, but yet so seen that we cannot tell what they are. As the distance increases, the confusion becomes greater, until at last the whole front of the house becomes merely a flat, pale space, in which, however, there is still observable a kind of richness and checkering, caused by the details in it, which, though totally merged and lost in the mass, have still an influence on the texture of that mass; until at last the whole house itself becomes a mere light or dark spot which we can plainly see, but cannot tell what it is, nor distinguish it from a stone or any other object.

§ 2. Causes confusion, but not annihilation of details.

Now what I particularly wish to insist upon, is the state of vision in which all the details of an object are seen, and yet seen in such confusion and disorder that we cannot in the least tell what they are, or what they mean. It is not mist between us and the object, still less is it shade, still less is it want of character; it is a confusion, a mystery, an interfering of undecided lines with each other, not a diminution of their number; window and door, architrave and frieze, all are there: it is no cold and vacant mass, it is full and rich and abundant, and yet you cannot see a single form so as to know what it is. Observe your friend's face as he is coming up to you; first it is nothing more than a white spot; now it is a face, but you cannot

§ 3. Instances in various objects.

see the two eyes, nor the mouth, even as spots; you see a confusion of lines, a something which you know from experience to be indicative of a face, and yet you cannot tell how it is so. Now he is nearer, and you can see the spots for the eyes and mouth, but they are not blank spots neither; there is detail in them; you cannot see the lips, nor the teeth, nor the brows, and yet you see more than mere spots; it is a mouth and an eye, and there is light and sparkle and expression in them, but nothing distinct. Now he is nearer still, and you can see that he is like your friend, but you cannot tell whether he is or not; there is a vagueness and indecision of line still. Now you are sure, but even yet there are a thousand things in his face which have their effect in inducing the recognition, but which you cannot see so as to know what they are.

Changes like these, and states of vision corresponding to them, take place with each and all of the objects of nature, and two great principles of truth are deducible from their observation. First, place an object as close to the eye as you like, there is always something in it which you *cannot* see, except in the hinted and mysterious manner above described. You can see the texture of a piece of dress, but you cannot see the individual threads which compose it, though they are all felt, and have each of them influence on the eye. Secondly, place an object as far from the eye as you like, and until it becomes itself a mere spot, there is always something in it which you *can* see, though only in the hinted manner above described. Its shadows and lines and local colors are not lost sight of as it retires; they get mixed and indistinguishable, but they are still there, and there is a difference always perceivable between an object possessing such details and a flat or vacant space. The grass blades of a meadow a mile off, are so far dis-

§ 4. Two great resultant truths; that nature is never distinct, and never vacant.

cernible that there will be a marked difference between its appearance and that of a piece of wood painted green. And thus nature is never distinct and never vacant, she is always mysterious, but always abundant; you always see something, but you never see all.

And thus arise that exquisite finish and fulness which God has appointed to be the perpetual source of fresh pleasure to the cultivated and observant eye,—a finish which no distance can render invisible, and no nearness comprehensible; which in every stone, every bough, every cloud, and every wave is multiplied around us, forever presented, and forever exhaustless. And hence in art, every space or touch in which we can see everything, or in which we can see nothing, is false. Nothing can be true which is either complete or vacant; every touch is false which does not suggest more than it represents, and every space is false which represents nothing.

§ 5. Complete violation of both these principles by the old masters. They are either distinct or vacant.

Now, I would not wish for any more illustrative or marked examples of the total contradiction of these two great principles, than the landscape works of the old masters, taken as a body:—the Dutch masters furnishing the cases of seeing everything, and the Italians of seeing nothing. The rule with both is indeed the same, differently applied. "You shall see the bricks in the wall, and be able to count them, or you shall see nothing but a dead flat;" but the Dutch give you the bricks, and the Italians the flat. Nature's rule being the precise reverse —"You shall never be able to count the bricks, but you shall never see a dead space."

§ 6. Instances from Nicholas Poussin.

Take, for instance, the street in the centre of the really great landscape of Poussin (great in feeling at least) marked 260 in the Dulwich Gallery. The houses are dead square masses with a light side and a dark side, and black touches for windows. There is no suggestion of anything in any of

the spaces, the light wall is dead gray, the dark wall dead gray, and the windows dead black. How differently would nature have treated us. She would have let us see the Indian corn hanging on the walls, and the image of the Virgin at the angles, and the sharp, broken, broad shadows of the tiled eaves, and the deep ribbed tiles with the doves upon them, and the carved Roman capital built into the wall, and the white and blue stripes of the mattresses stuffed out of the windows, and the flapping corners of the mat blinds. All would have been there; not as such, not like the corn, nor blinds, nor tiles, not to be comprehended nor understood, but a confusion of yellow and black spots and strokes, carried far too fine for the eye to follow, microscopic in its minuteness, and filling every atom and part of space with mystery, out of which would have arranged itself the general impression of truth and life.

§ 7. From Claude.

Again, take the distant city on the right bank of the river in Claude's Marriage of Isaac and Rebecca, in the National Gallery. I have seen many cities in my life, and drawn not a few; and I have seen many fortifications, fancy ones included, which frequently supply us with very new ideas indeed, especially in matters of proportion; but I do not remember ever having met with either a city or a fortress *entirely* composed of round towers of various heights and sizes, all fac-similes of each other, and absolutely agreeing in the number of battlements. I have, indeed, some faint recollection of having delineated such an one in the first page of a spelling-book when I was four years old; but, somehow or other, the dignity and perfection of the ideal were not appreciated, and the volume was not considered to be increased in value by the frontispiece. Without, however, venturing to doubt the entire sublimity of the same ideal as it occurs in Claude, let us consider how nature, if she had been fortunate enough

to originate so perfect a conception, would have managed it in its details. Claude has permitted us to see every battlement, and the first impulse we feel upon looking at the picture is to count how many there are. Nature would have given us a peculiar confused roughness of the upper lines, a multitude of intersections and spots, which we should have known from experience was indicative of battlements, but which we might as well have thought of creating as of counting. Claude has given you the walls below in one dead void of uniform gray. There is nothing to be seen, nor felt, nor guessed at in it; it is gray paint or gray shade, whichever you may choose to call it, but it is nothing more. Nature would have let you see, nay, would have compelled you to see, thousands of spots and lines, not one to be absolutely understood or accounted for, but yet all characteristic and different from each other; breaking lights on shattered stones, vague shadows from waving vegetation, irregular stains of time and weather, mouldering hollows, sparkling casements—all would have been there—none, indeed, seen as such, none comprehensible or like themselves, but all visible; little shadows, and sparkles, and scratches, making that whole space of color a transparent, palpitating, various infinity.

§ 8. And G. Poussin.

Or take one of Poussin's extreme distances, such as that in the Sacrifice of Isaac. It is luminous, retiring, delicate and perfect in tone, and is quite complete enough to deceive and delight the careless eye to which all distances are alike; nay, it is perfect and masterly, and absolutely right if we consider it as a sketch,—as a first plan of a distance, afterwards to be carried out in detail. But we must remember that all these alternate spaces of gray and gold are not the landscape itself, but the treatment of it—not its substance, but its light and shade. They are just what nature would cast over it, and write upon it with every

cloud, but which she would cast in play, and without carefulness, as matters of the very smallest possible importance. All her work and her attention would be given to bring out from underneath this, and through this, the forms and the material character which this can only be valuable to illustrate, not to conceal. Every one of those broad spaces she would linger over in protracted delight, teaching you fresh lessons in every hairsbreadth of it, and pouring her fulness of invention into it, until the mind lost itself in following her,—now fringing the dark edge of the shadow with a tufted line of level forest—now losing it for an instant in a breath of mist—then breaking it with the white gleaming angle of a narrow brook—then dwelling upon it again in a gentle, mounded, melting undulation, over the other side of which she would carry you down into a dusty space of soft, crowded light, with the hedges, and the paths, and the sprinkled cottages and scattered trees mixed up and mingled together in one beautiful, delicate, impenetrable mystery—sparkling and melting, and passing away into the sky, without one line of distinctness, or one instant of vacancy.

§ 9. The imperative necessity, in landscape painting, of fulness and finish.

Now it is, indeed, impossible for the painter to follow all this—he cannot come up to the same degree and order of infinity—but he can give us a lesser kind of infinity. He has not one-thousandth part of the space to occupy which nature has; but he can, at least, leave no part of that space vacant and unprofitable. If nature carries out her minutiæ over miles, he has no excuse for generalizing in inches. And if he will only give us all he can, if he will give us a fulness as complete and as mysterious as nature's, we will pardon him for its being the fulness of a cup instead of an ocean. But we will not pardon him, if, because he has not the mile to occupy, he will not occupy the inch, and because he has fewer

means at his command, will leave half of those in his power unexerted. Still less will we pardon him for mistaking the sport of nature for her labor, and for following her only in her hour of rest, without observing how she has worked for it. After spending centuries in raising the forest, and guiding the river, and modelling the mountain, she exults over her work in buoyancy of spirit, with playful sunbeam and flying cloud; but the painter must go through the same labor, or he must not have the same recreation. Let him chisel his rock faithfully, and tuft his forest delicately, and then we will allow him his freaks of light and shade, and thank him for them; but we will not be put off with the play before the lesson—with the adjunct instead of the essence—with the illustration instead of the fact.

§ 10. Breadth is not vacancy.

I am somewhat anticipating my subject here, because I can scarcely help answering the objections which I know must arise in the minds of most readers, especially of those who are *partially* artistical, respecting "generalization," "breadth," "effect," etc. It were to be wished that our writers on art would not dwell so frequently on the necessity of breadth, without explaining what it means; and that we had more constant reference made to the principle which I can only remember having seen once clearly explained and insisted on,—that breadth is not vacancy. Generalization is unity, not destruction of part; and composition is not annihilation, but arrangement of materials. The breadth which unites the truths of nature with her harmonies, is meritorious and beautiful; but the breadth which annihilates those truths by the million, is not painting nature, but painting over her. And so the masses which result from right concords and relations of details, are sublime and impressive; but the masses which result from the eclipse of details are contemptible

and painful.* And we shall show, in following parts of the work, that distances like those of Poussin are mere meaningless tricks of clever execution, which, when once discovered, the artist may repeat over and over again, with mechanical contentment and perfect satisfaction, both to himself and to his superficial admirers, with no more exertion of intellect nor awakening of feeling than any tradesman has in multiplying some ornamental pattern of furniture. Be this as it may, however, (for we cannot enter upon the discussion of the question here,) the falsity and imperfection of such distances admit of no dispute. Beautiful and ideal they may be; true they are not: and in the same way we might go through every part and portion of the works of the old masters, showing throughout, either that you have every leaf and blade of grass staring defiance to the mystery of nature, or that you have dead spaces of absolute vacuity, equally determined in their denial of her fulness. And even if we ever find (as here and there, in their better pictures, we do) changeful passages of agreeable playing color, or mellow and transparent modulations of mysterious atmosphere, even here the touches, though satisfactory to the eye, are suggestive of nothing,—they are characterless,—they have none of the peculiar expressiveness and meaning by which nature maintains the variety and interest even of what she most conceals. She always tells a story, however hintedly and vaguely; each of her touches is different from all the others; and we feel with every one, that though we cannot tell what it is, it cannot be *anything;* while even the most dexterous distances of the old masters pretend to secrecy without

* Of course much depends upon the kind of detail so lost. An artist may generalize the trunk of a tree, where he only loses lines of bark, and do us a kindness; but he must not generalize the details of a champaign, in which there is a history of creation. The full discussion of the subject belongs to a future part of our investigation.

having anything to conceal, and are ambiguous, not from the concentration of meaning, but from the want of it.

§ 11. The fulness and mystery of Turner's distances.

And now, take up one of Turner's distances, it matters not which, or of what kind,—drawing or painting, small or great, done thirty years ago, or for last year's Academy, as you like; say that of the Mercury and Argus, and look if every fact which I have just been pointing out in nature be not carried out in it. Abundant, beyond the power of the eye to embrace or follow, vast and various, beyond the power of the mind to comprehend, there is yet not one atom in its whole extent and mass which does not suggest more than it represents; nor does it suggest vaguely, but in such a manner as to prove that the conception of each individual inch of that distance is absolutely clear and complete in the master's mind, a separate picture fully worked out: but yet, clearly and fully as the idea is formed, just so much of it is given, and no more, as nature would have allowed us to feel or see; just so much as would enable a spectator of experience and knowledge to understand almost every minute fragment of separate detail, but appears, to the unpractised and careless eye, just what a distance of nature's own would appear, an unintelligible mass. Not one line out of the millions there is without meaning, yet there is not one which is not affected and disguised by the dazzle and indecision of distance. No form is made out, and yet no form is unknown.

§ 12. Farther illustrations in architectural drawing.

Perhaps the truth of this system of drawing is better to be understood by observing the distant character of rich architecture, than of any other object. Go to the top of Highgate Hill on a clear summer morning at five o'clock, and look at Westminster Abbey. You will receive an impression of a building enriched with multitudinous vertical lines. Try to distinguish one of those lines all the way down

from the one next to it: You cannot. Try to count them: You cannot. Try to make out the beginning or end of any one of them: You cannot. Look at it generally, and it is all symmetry and arrangement. Look at it in its parts, and it is all inextricable confusion. Am not I, at this moment, describing a piece of Turner's drawing, with the same words by which I describe nature? And what would one of the old masters have done with such a building as this in his distance? Either he would only have given the shadows of the buttresses, and the light and dark sides of the two towers, and two dots for the windows; or if more ignorant and more ambitious, he had attempted to render some of the detail, it would have been done by distinct lines,—would have been broad caricature of the delicate building, felt at once to be false, ridiculous, and offensive. His most successful effort would only have given us, through his carefully toned atmosphere, the effect of a colossal parish church, without one line of carving on its economic sides. Turner, and Turner only, would follow and render on the canvas that mystery of decided line,—that distinct, sharp, visible, but unintelligible and inextricable richness, which, examined part by part, is to the eye nothing but confusion and defeat, which, taken as a whole, is all unity, symmetry, and truth.*

§ 13. In near objects as well as distances.

Nor is this mode of representation true only with respect to distances. Every object, however near the eye, has something about it which you cannot see, and which brings the mystery of distance even into every part and portion of what we suppose ourselves to see most distinctly. Stand

* Vide, for illustration, Fontainebleau in the Illustrations to Scott; Vignette at opening of Human Life, in Rogers's Poems; Venice, in the Italy; Chateau de Blois; the Rouen, and Pont Neuf, Paris, in the Rivers of France. The distances of all the Academy pictures of Venice, especially the Shylock, are most instructive.

in the Piazza di St. Marco at Venice, as close to the church as you can, without losing sight of the top of it. Look at the capitals of the columns on the second story. You see that they are exquisitely rich, carved all over. Tell me their patterns: You cannot. Tell me the direction of a single line in them: You cannot. Yet you see a multitude of lines, and you have so much feeling of a certain tendency and arrangement in those lines, that you are quite sure the capitals are beautiful, and that they are all different from each other. But I defy you to make out one single line in any one of them. Now go to Canaletto's painting of this church, in the Palazzo Manfrini, taken from the very spot on which you stood. How much has he represented of all this? A black dot under each capital for the shadow, and a yellow one above it for the light. There is not a vestige nor indication of carving or decoration of any sort or kind.

§ 14. Vacancy and falsehood of Canaletto.

Very different from this, but erring on the other side, is the ordinary drawing of the architect, who gives the principal lines of the design with delicate clearness and precision, but with no uncertainty or mystery about them; which mystery being removed, all space and size are destroyed with it, and we have a drawing of a model, not of a building. But in the capital lying on the foreground in Turner's Daphne hunting with Leucippus, we have the perfect truth. Not one jag of the acanthus leaves is absolutely visible, the lines are all disorder, but you feel in an instant that all are there. And so it will invariably be found through every portion of detail in his late and most perfect works.

But if there be this mystery and inexhaustible finish merely in the more delicate instances of architectural decoration, how much more in the ceaseless and incomparable decoration of nature. The detail of a single weedy bank laughs

§ 15. Still greater fulness and finish in landscape foregrounds.

the carving of ages to scorn. Every leaf and stalk has a design and tracery upon it,—every knot of grass an intricacy of shade which the labor of years could never imitate, and which, if such labor could follow it out even to the last fibres of the leaflets, would yet be falsely represented, for, as in all other cases brought forward, it is not clearly seen, but confusedly and mysteriously. That which is nearness for the bank, is distance for its details; and however near it may be, the greater part of those details are still a beautiful incomprehensibility.*

* It is to be remembered, however, that these truths present themselves in all probability under very different phases to individuals of different powers of vision. Many artists who appear to generalize rudely or rashly are perhaps faithfully endeavoring to render the appearance which nature bears to sight of limited range. Others may be led by their singular keenness of sight into inexpedient detail. Works which are painted for effect at a certain distance must be always seen at disadvantage by those whose sight is of different range from the painter's. Another circumstance to which I ought above to have alluded is the scale of the picture; for there are different degrees of generalization and different necessities of symbolism, belonging to every scale; the stipple of the miniature painter would be offensive on features of the life size, and the leaves which Tintoret may articulate on a canvas of sixty feet by twenty-five, must be generalized by Turner on one of four by three. Another circumstance of some importance is the assumed distance of the foreground; many landscape painters seem to think their nearest foreground is always equally near, whereas its distance from the spectator varies not a little, being always at least its own calculable breadth from side to side as estimated by figures or any other object of known size at the nearest part of it. With Claude almost always; with Turner often, as in the Daphne and Leucippus, this breadth is forty or fifty yards; and as the nearest foreground object *must* then be at least that distance removed, and *may* be much more, it is evident that no completion of close detail is in such cases allowable, (see here another proof of Claude's erroneous practice;) with Titian and Tintoret, on the contrary, the foreground is rarely more than five or six yards broad, and its objects therefore being only five or six yards distant are entirely detailed.

None of these circumstances, however, in anywise affect the great principle, the confusion of detail taking place sooner or later in all cases. I ought to have noted, however, that many of the pictures of

Hence, throughout the picture, the expression of space, and size is dependent upon obscurity, united with, or rather resultant from, exceeding fulness. We destroy both space and size, either by the vacancy, which affords us no measure of space, or by the distinctness, which gives us a false one. The distance of Poussin, having no indication of trees, nor of meadows, nor of character of any kind, may be fifty miles off, or may be five; we cannot tell—we have no measure, and in consequence, no vivid impression. But a middle distance of Hobbima's involves a contradiction in terms; it states a distance by perspective, which it contradicts by distinctness of detail.

§ 16. Space and size are destroyed alike by distinctness and by vacancy.

A single dusty roll of Turner's brush is more truly expressive of the infinity of foliage, than the niggling of Hobbima could have rendered his canvas, if he had worked on it till doomsday. What Sir J. Reynolds says of the misplaced labor of his Roman acquaintance on separate

§ 17. Swift execution best secures perfection of detail.

Turner in which the confused drawing has been least understood, have been luminous *twilights;* and that the uncertainty of twilight is therefore added to that of general distance. In the evenings of the south it not unfrequently happens that objects touched with the reflected light of the western sky, continue even for the space of half an hour after sunset, glowing, ruddy, and intense in color, and almost as bright as if they were still beneath actual sunshine, even till the moon begins to cast a shadow: but in spite of this brilliancy of color all the details become ghostly and ill-defined. This is a favorite moment of Turner's, and he invariably characterizes it, not by gloom, but by uncertainty of detail. I have never seen the effect of clear twilight thoroughly rendered by art; that effect in which all details are lost, while intense clearness and light are still felt in the atmosphere, in which nothing is distinctly seen, and yet it is not darkness, far less mist, that is the cause of concealment. Turner's efforts at rendering this effect (as the Wilderness of Engedi, Assos, Chateau de Blois, Caerlaverock, and others innumerable,) have always some slight appearance of mistiness, owing to the indistinctness of details; but it remains to be shown that any closer approximation to the effect is possible.

leaves of foliage, and the certainty he expresses that a man who attended to general character would in five minutes produce a more faithful representation of a tree, than the unfortunate mechanist in as many years, is thus perfectly true and well founded; but this is not because details are undesirable, but because they are best given by swift execution, and because, individually, they cannot be given at all. But it should be observed (though we shall be better able to insist upon this point in future) that much of harm and error has arisen from the supposition and assertions of swift and brilliant historical painters, that the same principles of execution are entirely applicable to landscape, which are right for the figure. The artist who falls into extreme detail in drawing the human form, is apt to become disgusting rather than pleasing. It is more agreeable that the general outline and soft hues of flesh should alone be given, than its hairs, and veins, and lines of intersection. And even the most rapid and generalizing expression of the human body, if directed by perfect knowledge, and rigidly faithful in drawing, will commonly omit very little of what is agreeable or impressive. But the exclusively generalizing landscape painter omits the whole of what is valuable in his subject,—omits thoughts, designs, and beauties by the million, everything, indeed, which can furnish him with variety or expression. A distance in Lincolnshire, or in Lombardy, might both be generalized into such blue and yellow stripes as we see in Poussin; but whatever there is of beauty or character in either, depends altogether on our understanding the details, and feeling the difference between the morasses and ditches of the one, and the rolling sea of mulberry trees of the other. And so in every part of the subject. I have no hesitation in asserting that it is *impossible* to go too fine, or think too much about details in landscape, so

§ 18. Finish is far more necessary in landscape than in historical subjects.

that they be rightly arranged and rightly massed; but that it is equally impossible to render anything like the fulness or the space of nature, except by that mystery and obscurity of execution which she herself uses, and in which Turner only has followed her.

§ 19. Recapitulation of the section.

We have now rapidly glanced at such general truths of nature as can be investigated without much knowledge of what is beautiful. Questions of arrangement, massing, and generalization, I prefer leaving untouched, until we know something about details, and something about what is beautiful. All that is desirable, even in these mere technical and artificial points, is based upon truths and habits of nature; but we cannot understand those truths until we are acquainted with the specific forms and minor details which they affect, or out of which they arise. I shall, therefore, proceed to examine the invaluable and essential truths of specific character and form—briefly and imperfectly, indeed, as needs must be, but yet at length sufficient to enable the reader to pursue, if he will, the subject for himself.

SECTION III.

OF TRUTH OF SKIES.

CHAPTER I.

OF THE OPEN SKY.

§ 1. The peculiar adaptation of the sky to the pleasing and teaching of man.

It is a strange thing how little in general people know about the sky. It is the part of creation in which nature has done more for the sake of pleasing man, more for the sole and evident purpose of talking to him and teaching him, than in any other of her works, and it is just the part in which we least attend to her. There are not many of her other works in which some more material or essential purpose than the mere pleasing of man is not answered by every part of their organization; but every essential purpose of the sky might, so far as we know, be answered, if once in three days, or thereabouts, a great ugly black rain cloud were brought up over the blue, and everything well watered, and so all left blue again till next time, with perhaps a film of morning and evening mist for dew. And instead of this, there is not a moment of any day of our lives, when nature is not producing scene after scene, picture after picture, glory after glory, and working still upon such exquisite and constant principles of the most perfect beauty, that it is quite certain it is all done for us, and intended for our perpetual pleasure. And every

man, wherever placed, however far from other sources of interest or of beauty, has this doing for him constantly. The noblest scenes of the earth can be seen and known but by few; it is not intended that man should live always in the midst of them, he injures them by his presence, he ceases to feel them if he be always with them; but the sky is for all; bright as it is, it is not "too bright, nor good, for human nature's daily food;" it is fitted in all its functions for the perpetual comfort and exalting of the heart, for the soothing it and purifying it from its dross and dust. Sometimes gentle, sometimes capricious, sometimes awful, never the same for two moments together; almost human in its passions, almost spiritual in its tenderness, almost divine in its infinity, its appeal to what is immortal in us, is as distinct, as its ministry of chastisement or of blessing to what is mortal is essential. And yet we never attend to it, we never make it a subject of thought, but as it has to do with our animal sensations; we look upon all by which it speaks to us more clearly than to brutes, upon all which bears witness to the intention of the Supreme, that we are to receive more from the covering vault than the light and the dew which we share with the weed and the worm, only as a succession of meaningless and monotonous accident, too common and too vain to be worthy of a moment of watchfulness, or a glance of admiration. If in our moments of utter idleness and insipidity, we turn to the sky as a last resource, which of its phenomena do we speak of? One says it has been wet, and another it has been windy, and another it has been warm. Who, among the whole chattering crowd, can tell me of the forms and the precipices of the chain of tall white mountains that girded the horizon at noon yesterday? Who saw the narrow sunbeam that came out of the south, and smote upon their summits until they melted and mouldered away in a dust

§ 2. The carelessness with which its lessons are received.

of blue rain? Who saw the dance of the dead clouds when the sunlight left them last night, and the west wind blew them before it like withered leaves? All has passed, unregretted as unseen; or if the apathy be ever shaken off, even for an instant, it is only by what is gross, or what is extraordinary; and yet it is not in the broad and fierce manifestations of the elemental energies, not in the clash of the hail, nor the drift of the whirlwind, that the highest characters of the sublime are developed. God is not in the earthquake, nor in the fire, but in the still small voice. They are but the blunt and the low faculties of our nature, which can only be addressed through lamp-black and lightning. It is in quiet and subdued passages of unobtrusive majesty, the deep, and the calm, and the perpetual,—that which must be sought ere it is seen, and loved ere it is understood,—things which the angels work out for us daily, and yet vary eternally, which are never wanting, and never repeated, which are to be found always yet each found but once; it is through these that the lesson of devotion is chiefly taught, and the blessing of beauty given. These are what the artist of highest aim must study; it is these, by the combination of which his ideal is to be created; these, of which so little notice is ordinarily taken by common observers, that I fully believe, little as people in general are concerned with art, more of their ideas of sky are derived from pictures than from reality, and that if we could examine the conception formed in the minds of most educated persons when we talk of clouds, it would frequently be found composed of fragments of blue and white reminiscences of the old masters.

§ 3. The most essential of these lessons are the gentlest.

§ 4. Many of our ideas of sky altogether conventional.

I shall enter upon the examination of what is true in sky at greater length, because it is the only part of a picture of which all, if they will, may be competent judges.

What I may have to assert respecting the rocks of Salvator, or the boughs of Claude, I can scarcely prove, except to those whom I can immure for a month or two in the fastnesses of the Apennines, or guide in their summer walks again and again through the ravines of Sorrento. But what I say of the sky can be brought to an immediate test by all, and I write the more decisively, in the hope that it may be so.

§ 5. Nature and essential qualities of the open blue.

Let us begin then with the simple open blue of the sky. This is of course the color of the pure atmospheric air, not the aqueous vapor, but the pure azote and oxygen, and it is the total color of the whole mass of that air between us and the void of space. It is modified by the varying quantity of aqueous vapor suspended in it, whose color, in its most imperfect, and therefore most visible, state of solution, is pure white, (as in steam,) which receives, like any other white, the warm hues of the rays of the sun, and, according to its quantity and imperfect solution, makes the sky paler, and at the same time more or less gray, by mixing warm tones with its blue. This gray aqueous vapor, when very decided, becomes mist, and when local, cloud. Hence the sky is to be considered as a transparent blue liquid, in which, at various elevations, clouds are suspended, those clouds being themselves only particular visible spaces of a substance with which the whole mass of this liquid is more or less impregnated.

§ 6. Its connection with clouds.

Now, we all know this perfectly well, and yet we so far forget it in practice, that we little notice the constant connection kept up by nature between her blue and her clouds, and we are not offended by the constant habit of the old masters, of considering the blue sky as totally distinct in its nature, and far separated from the vapors which float in it. With them, cloud is cloud, and blue is blue, and no kind of connection between them is ever hinted at. The sky is thought

of as a clear, high material dome, the clouds as separate bodies, suspended beneath it, and in consequence, however delicate and exquisitely removed in tone their skies may be, you always look *at* them, not *through* them. Now, if there be one characteristic of the sky more valuable or necessary to be rendered than another, it is that which Wordsworth has given in the second book of the Excursion:—

§ 7. Its exceeding depth.

> "The chasm of sky above my head
> Is Heaven's profoundest azure. No domain
> For fickle, short-lived clouds, to occupy,
> Or to pass through;—but rather an *abyss*
> In which the everlasting stars abide,
> And whose soft gloom, and boundless depth, might tempt
> The curious eye to look for them by day."

And, in his American Notes, I remember Dickens notices the same truth, describing himself as lying drowsily on the barge deck, looking not at, but *through* the sky. And if you look intensely at the pure blue of a serene sky, you will see that there is a variety and fulness in its very repose. It is not flat dead color, but a deep, quivering, transparent body of penetrable air, in which you trace or imagine short, falling spots of deceiving light, and dim shades, faint, veiled vestiges of dark vapor; and it is this trembling transparency which our great modern master has especially aimed at and given. His blue is never laid on in smooth coats, but in breaking, mingling, melting hues, a quarter of an inch of which, cut off from all the rest of the picture, is still *spacious*, still infinite and immeasurable in depth. It is a painting of the air, something into which you can see, through the parts which are near you into those which are far off; something which has no surface, and through which we can plunge far and farther, and without stay or end, into the profundity of space;—

§ 8. These qualities are especially given by modern masters.

whereas, with all the old landscape painters, except Claude, you may indeed go a long way before you come to the sky, but you will strike hard against it at last. A perfectly genuine and untouched sky of Claude is indeed most perfect, and beyond praise, in all qualities of air; though even with him, I often feel rather that there is a great deal of pleasant air between me and the firmament, than that the firmament itself is only air. I do not mean, however, to say a word against such skies as that of the Enchanted Castle, or that marked 30 in the National Gallery, or one or two which I remember at Rome; but how little and by how few these fine passages of Claude are appreciated, is sufficiently proved by the sufferance of such villainous and unpalliated copies as we meet with all over Europe, like the Marriage of Isaac, in our own Gallery, to remain under his name. In fact, I do not remember above ten pictures of Claude's, in which the skies, whether repainted or altogether copies, or perhaps from Claude's hand, but carelessly laid in, like that marked 241, Dulwich Gallery, were not fully as feelingless and false as those of other masters; while, with the Poussins, there are no favorable exceptions. Their skies are systematically wrong; take, for instance, the sky of the Sacrifice of Isaac. It is here high noon, as is shown by the shadow of the figures; and what sort of color is the sky at the top of the picture? Is it pale and gray with heat, full of sunshine, and unfathomable in depth? On the contrary, it is of a pitch of darkness which, except on the Mont Blanc or Chimborazo, is as purely impossible as color can be. He might as well have painted it coal black; and it is laid on with a dead coat of flat paint, having no one quality or resemblance of sky about it. It cannot have altered, because the land horizon is as delicate and tender in tone as possible, and is evidently

§ 9. And by Claude.

§ 10. Total absence of them in Poussin. Physical errors in his general treatment of open sky.

unchanged; and to complete the absurdity of the whole thing, this color holds its own, without graduation or alteration, to within three or four degrees of the horizon, where it suddenly becomes bold and unmixed yellow. Now the horizon at noon may be yellow when the whole sky is covered with dark clouds, and only *one* open streak of light left in the distance from which the whole light proceeds; but with a clear, open sky, and opposite the sun, at noon, such a yellow horizon as this is physically impossible. Even supposing that the upper part of the sky were pale and warm, and that the transition from the one hue to the other were effected imperceptibly and gradually, as is invariably the case in reality, instead of taking place within a space of two or three degrees;—even then, this gold yellow would be altogether absurd; but as it is, we have in this sky (and it is a fine picture—one of the best of Gaspar's that I know,) a notable example of the truth of the old masters—two impossible colors impossibly united! Find such a color in Turner's noonday zenith as the blue at the top, or such a color at a noonday horizon as the yellow at the bottom, or such a connection of any colors whatsoever as that in the centre, and then you may talk about his being false to nature if you will. Nor is this a solitary instance; it is Gaspar Poussin's favorite and characteristic effect. I remember twenty such, most of them worse than this, in the downright surface and opacity of blue.

§ 11. Errors of Cuyp in graduation of color.

Again, look at the large Cuyp in the Dulwich Gallery, which Mr. Hazlitt considers the "finest in the world," and of which he very complimentarily says, "The tender green of the valleys, the gleaming lake, the purple light of the hills, have an effect like the *down* on an unripe nectarine!" I ought to have apologized before now, for not having studied sufficiently in Covent Garden to be provided with terms of correct and classical criticism. One of my friends begged

me to observe, the other day, that Claude was "pulpy;" another added the yet more gratifying information that he was "juicy;" and it is now happily discovered that Cuyp is "downy." Now I dare say that the sky of this first-rate Cuyp is very like an unripe nectarine: all that I have to say about it is, that it is exceedingly unlike a sky. The blue remains unchanged and ungraduated over three-fourths of it, down to the horizon; while the sun, in the left-hand corner, is surrounded with a halo, first of yellow, and then of crude pink, both being separated from each other, and the last from the blue, as sharply as the belts of a rainbow, and both together not ascending ten degrees in the sky. Now it is difficult to conceive how any man calling himself a painter could impose such a thing on the public, and still more how the public can receive it, as a representation of that sunset purple which invariably extends its influence to the zenith, so that there is no pure blue anywhere, but a purple increasing in purity gradually down to its point of greatest intensity, (about forty-five degrees from the horizon,) and then melting imperceptibly into the gold, the three colors extending their influence over the whole sky; so that throughout the whole sweep of the heaven, there is no one spot where the color is not in an equal state of transition—passing from gold into orange, from that into rose, from that into purple, from that into blue, with absolute equality of change, so that in no place can it be said, "here it changes," and in no place, "here it is unchanging." This is invariably the case. There is no such thing—there never was, and never will be such a thing, while God's heaven remains as it is made—as a serene, sunset sky, with its purple and rose in *belts* about the sun.

Such bold, broad examples of ignorance as these would soon set aside all the claims of the professed landscape painters to truth, with whatever delicacy of color or ma-

nipulation they may be disguised. But there are some skies, of the Dutch school, in which clearness and coolness have been aimed at, instead of depth; and some introduced merely as backgrounds to the historical subjects of the older Italians, which there is no matching in modern times; one would think angels had painted them, for all is now clay and oil in comparison. It seems as if we had totally lost the art, for surely otherwise, however little our painters might aim at it or feel it, they would touch the chord sometimes by accident; but they never do, and the mechanical incapacity is still more strongly evidenced by the muddy struggles of the unhappy Germans, who have the feeling, partially strained, artificial, and diseased, indeed, but still genuine enough to bring out the tone, if they had the mechanical means and technical knowledge. But, however they were obtained, the clear tones of this kind of the older Italians are glorious and enviable in the highest degree; and we shall show, when we come to speak of the beautiful, that they are one of the most just grounds of the fame of the old masters.

§ 12. The exceeding value of the skies of the early Italian and Dutch schools. Their qualities are unattainable in modern times.

But there is a series of phenomena connected with the open blue of the sky, which we must take especial notice of, as it is of constant occurrence in the works of Turner and Claude, the effects, namely, of visible sunbeams. It will be necessary for us thoroughly to understand the circumstances under which such effects take place.

§ 13. Phenomena of visible sunbeams. Their nature and cause.

Aqueous vapor or mist, suspended in the atmosphere, becomes visible exactly as dust does in the air of a room. In the shadows you not only cannot see the dust itself, because unillumined, but you can see other objects through the dust without obscurity, the air being thus actually rendered more transparent by a deprivation of light. Where a sunbeam enters, every particle of dust

becomes visible, and a palpable interruption to the sight, so that a transverse sunbeam is a real obstacle to the vision, you cannot see things clearly through it.

In the same way, wherever vapor is illuminated by transverse rays there it becomes visible as a whiteness more or less affecting the purity of the blue, and destroying it exactly in proportion to the degree of illumination. But where vapor is in shade, it has very little effect on the sky, perhaps making it a little deeper and grayer than it otherwise would be, but not itself, unless very dense, distinguishable or felt as mist.

The appearance of mist or whiteness in the blue of the sky, is thus a circumstance which more or less accompanies sunshine, and which, supposing the quantity of vapor constant, is greatest in the brightest sunlight. When there are no clouds in the sky, the whiteness, as it affects the whole sky equally, is not particularly noticeable. But when there are clouds between us and the sun, the sun being low, those clouds cast shadows along and through the mass of suspended vapor. Within the space of these shadows, the vapor, as above stated, becomes transparent and invisible, and the sky appears of a pure blue. But where the sunbeams strike, the vapor becomes visible in the form of the beams, occasioning those radiating shafts of light which are one of the most valuable and constant accompaniments of a low sun. The denser the mist, the more distinct and sharp-edged will these rays be; when the air is very clear, they are mere vague, flushing, gradated passages of light; when it is very thick, they are keen-edged and decisive in a high degree.

§ 14. They are only illuminated mist, and cannot appear when the sky is free from vapor, nor when it is without clouds.

We see then, first, that a quantity of mist dispersed through the whole space of the sky, is necessary to this phenomenon; and secondly, that what we usually think of as beams of greater brightness than the rest of the

sky, are in reality only a part of that sky in its natural state of illumination, cut off and rendered brilliant by the shadows from the clouds,—that these shadows are in reality the source of the appearance of beams,—that, therefore, no part of the sky can present such an appearance, except when there are broken clouds between it and the sun; and lastly, that the shadows cast from such clouds are not necessarily gray or dark, but very nearly of the natural pure blue of a sky destitute of vapor.

§ 15. Erroneous tendency in the representation of such phenomena by the old masters.

Now, as it has been proved that the appearance of beams can only take place in a part of the sky which has clouds between it and the sun, it is evident that no appearance of beams can ever begin from the orb itself, except when there is a cloud or solid body of some kind between us and it; but that such appearances will almost invariably begin on the dark side of some of the clouds around it, the orb itself remaining the centre of a broad blaze of united light. Wordsworth has given us in two lines, the only circumstances under which rays can ever appear to have origin in the orb itself:—

> "But rays of light,
> Now *suddenly* diverging from the orb,
> *Retired behind the mountain tops, or veiled*
> *By the dense air*, shot upwards."
>
> EXCURSION, Book IX.

And Turner has given us the effect magnificently in the Dartmouth of the River Scenery. It is frequent among the old masters, and constant in Claude; though the latter, from drawing his beams too fine, represents the effect upon the dazzled eye rather than the light which actually exists, and approximates very closely to the ideal which we see in the sign of the Rising Sun; nay, I am nearly sure that I remember cases in which he has given us the diverging beam, without any cloud or hill

interfering with the orb. It may, perhaps, be somewhat difficult to say how far it is allowable to represent that kind of ray which is seen by the dazzled eye. It is very certain that we never look towards a bright sun without seeing glancing rays issue from it; but it is equally certain that those rays are no more real existences than the red and blue circles which we see after having been so dazzled, and that if we are to represent the rays we ought also to cover our sky with pink and blue circles. I should on the whole consider it utterly false in principle to represent the visionary beam, and that we ought only to show that which has actual existence.

§ 16. The ray which appears in the dazzled eye should not be represented.

Such we find to be the constant practice of Turner. Even where, owing to interposed clouds, he has beams appearing to issue from the orb itself, they are broad bursts of light, not spiky rays; and his more usual practice is to keep all near the sun in one simple blaze of intense light, and from the first clouds to throw beams to the zenith, though he often does not permit any appearance of rays until close to the zenith itself. Open at the 80th page of the Illustrated edition of Rogers's poems. You have there a sky blazing with sunbeams; but they all begin a long way from the sun, and they are accounted for by a mass of dense clouds surrounding the orb itself. Turn to the 7th page. Behind the old oak, where the sun is supposed to be, you have only a blaze of undistinguished light; but up on the left, over the edge of the cloud, on its dark side, the sunbeam. Turn to page 192,—blazing rays again, but all beginning where the clouds do, not one can you trace to the sun; and observe how carefully the long shadow on the mountain is accounted for by the dim dark promontory projecting out near the sun. I need not multiply examples; you will find various modifications and uses of

§ 17. The practice of Turner. His keen perception of the more delicate phenomena of rays.

these effects throughout his works. But you will not find a single trace of them in the old masters. They give you the rays issuing from behind black clouds, and because they are a coarse and common effect which could not possibly escape their observation, and because they are easily imitated. They give you the spiky shafts issuing from the orb itself, because these are partially symbolical of light, and assist a tardy imagination, as two or three rays scratched round the sun with a pen would, though they would be rays of darkness instead of light.* But of the most beautiful phenomenon of all, the appearance of the delicate ray far in the sky, threading its way among the thin, transparent clouds, while all around the sun is unshadowed fire, there is no record nor example whatsoever in their works. It was too delicate and spiritual for them; probably their blunt and feelingless eyes never perceived it in nature, and their untaught imaginations were not likely to originate it in the study.

§ 18. The total absence of any evidence of such perception in the works of the old masters.

Little is to be said of the skies of our other landscape artists. In paintings, they are commonly toneless,

* I have left this passage as it stood originally, because it is right as far as it goes; yet it speaks with too little respect of symbolism, which is often of the highest use in religious art, and in some measure is allowable in all art. In the works of almost all the greatest masters there are portions which are explanatory rather than representative, and typical rather than imitative; nor could these be parted with but at infinite loss. Note, with respect to the present question, the daring black sunbeams of Titian, in his woodcut of St. Francis receiving the stigmata, and compare here Part III. Sect. II. Chap. IV. § 18; Chap. V. § 13. And though I believe that I am right in considering all such symbolism as out of place in pure landscape, and in attributing that of Claude to ignorance or inability, and not to feeling, yet I praise Turner not so much for his absolute refusal to represent the spiky ray about the sun, as for his perceiving and rendering that which Claude never perceived, the multitudinous presence of radiating light in the upper sky, and on all its countless ranks of subtile cloud.

crude, and wanting in depth and transparency; but in drawings, some very perfect and delicate examples have been produced by various members of the old Water Color Society, and one or two others; but with respect to the qualities of which we are at present speaking, it is not right to compare drawings with paintings, as the wash or sponging, or other artifices peculiar to water color, are capable of producing an appearance of quality which it needs much higher art to produce in oils.

§ 19. Truth of the skies of modern drawings.

Taken generally, the open skies of the moderns are inferior in quality to picked and untouched skies of the greatest of the ancients, but far superior to the average class of pictures which we have every day fathered upon their reputation. Nine or ten skies of Claude might be named which are not to be contended with, in their way, and as many of Cuyp. Teniers has given some very wonderful passages, and the clearness of the early Italian and Dutch schools is beyond all imitation. But the common blue daubing which we hear every day in our best galleries attributed to Claude and Cuyp, and the genuine skies of Salvator, and of both the Poussins, are not to be compared for an instant with the best works of modern times, even in quality and transparency; while in all matters requiring delicate observation or accurate science,—in all which was not attainable by technicalities of art, and which depended upon the artist's knowledge and understanding of nature, all the works of the ancients are alike the productions of mere children, sometimes manifesting great sensibility, but proving at the same time, feebly developed intelligence and ill-regulated observation.

§ 20. Recapitulation. The best skies of the ancients are, in *quality*, inimitable, but in rendering of various truth, childish.

CHAPTER II.

OF TRUTH OF CLOUDS: — FIRST, OF THE REGION OF THE CIRRUS.

§ 1. Difficulty of ascertaining wherein the truth of clouds consists.

Our next subject of investigation must be the specific character of clouds, a species of truth which is especially neglected by artists; first, because as it is within the limits of possibility that a cloud may assume almost any form, it is difficult to point out, and not always easy to feel, wherein error consists; and secondly, because it is totally impossible to study the forms of clouds from nature with care and accuracy, as a change in the subject takes place between every touch of the following pencil, and parts of an outline sketched at different instants cannot harmonize, nature never having intended them to come together. Still if artists were more in the habit of sketching clouds rapidly, and as accurately as possible in the outline, from nature, instead of daubing down what they call "effects" with the brush, they would soon find there is more beauty about their forms than can be arrived at by any random felicity of invention, however brilliant, and more essential character than can be violated without incurring the charge of falsehood,—falsehood as direct and definite, though not as traceable as error in the less varied features of organic form.

The first and most important character of clouds, is dependent on the different altitudes at which they are formed. The atmosphere may be conveniently considered as divided into three spaces, each inhabited by

clouds of specific character altogether different, though, in reality, there is no distinct limit fixed between them by nature, clouds being formed at *every* altitude, and partaking according to their altitude, more or less of the characters of the upper or lower regions. The scenery of the sky is thus formed of an infinitely graduated series of systematic forms of cloud, each of which has its own region in which alone it is formed, and each of which has specific characters which can only be properly determined by comparing them as they are found clearly distinguished by intervals of considerable space. I shall therefore consider the sky as divided into three regions—the upper region, or region of the cirrus; the central region, or region of the stratus; the lower region, or the region of the rain-cloud.

§ 2. Variation of their character at different elevations. The three regions to which they may conveniently be considered as belonging.

The clouds which I wish to consider as included in the upper region, never touch even the highest mountains of Europe, and may therefore be looked upon as never formed below an elevation of at least 15,000 feet; they are the motionless multitudinous lines of delicate vapor with which the blue of the open sky is commonly streaked or speckled after several days of fine weather. I must be pardoned for giving a detailed description of their specific characters as they are of constant occurrence in the works of modern artists, and I shall have occasion to speak frequently of them in future parts of the work. Their chief characters are—first, Symmetry: They are nearly always arranged in some definite and evident order, commonly in long ranks reaching sometimes from the zenith to the horizon, each rank composed of an infinite number of transverse bars of about the same length, each bar thickest in the middle, and terminating in a traceless vaporous point at

§ 3. Extent of the upper region.

§ 4. The symmetrical arrangement of its clouds.

each side; the ranks are in the direction of the wind, and the bars of course at right angles to it; these latter are commonly slightly bent in the middle. Frequently two systems of this kind, indicative of two currents of wind, at different altitudes intersect one another, forming a network. Another frequent arrangement is in groups of excessively fine, silky, parallel fibres, commonly radiating, or having a tendency to radiate, from one of their extremities, and terminating in a plumy sweep at the other:—these are vulgarly known as "mares' tails." The plumy and expanded extremity of these is often bent upwards, sometimes back and up again, giving an appearance of great flexibility and unity at the same time, as if the clouds were tough, and would hold together however bent. The narrow extremity is invariably turned to the wind, and the fibres are parallel with its direction. The upper clouds always fall into some modification of one or other of these arrangements. They thus differ from all other clouds, in having a plan and system; whereas other clouds, though there are certain laws which they cannot break, have yet perfect freedom from anything like a relative and general system of government. The upper clouds are to the lower, what soldiers on parade are to a mixed multitude; no men walk on their heads or their hands, and so there are certain laws which no clouds violate; but there is nothing except in the upper clouds resembling symmetrical discipline.

§ 5. Their exceeding delicacy.

Secondly, Sharpness of Edge: The edges of the bars of the upper clouds which are turned to the wind, are often the sharpest which the sky shows; no outline whatever of any other kind of cloud, however marked and energetic, ever approaches the delicate decision of these edges. The outline of a black thunder-cloud is striking, from the great energy of the color or shade of the general mass; but as a line,

it is soft and indistinct, compared with the edge of the cirrus, in a clear sky with a brisk breeze. On the other hand, the edge of the bar turned away from the wind is always soft, often imperceptible, melting into the blue interstice between it and its next neighbor. Commonly the sharper one edge is, the softer is the other, and the clouds look flat, and as if they slipped over each other like the scales of a fish. When both edges are soft, as is always the case when the sky is clear and windless, the cloud looks solid, round, and fleecy.

§ 6. Their number.

Thirdly, Multitude: The delicacy of these vapors is sometimes carried into such an infinity of division, that no other sensation of number that the earth or heaven can give is so impressive. Number is always most felt when it is symmetrical, (vide Burke on "Sublime," Part ii. sect. 8,) and, therefore, no sea-waves nor fresh leaves make their number so evident or so impressive as these vapors. Nor is nature content with an infinity of bars or lines alone—each bar is in its turn severed into a number of small undulatory masses, more or less connected according to the violence of the wind. When this division is merely effected by undulation, the cloud exactly resembles sea-sand ribbed by the tide; but when the division amounts to real separation we have the mottled or mackerel skies. Commonly, the greater the division of its bars, the broader and more shapeless is the rank or field, so that in the mottled sky it is lost altogether, and we have large irregular fields of equal size, masses like flocks of sheep; such clouds are three or four thousand feet below the legitimate cirrus. I have seen them cast a shadow on the Mont Blanc at sunset, so that they must descend nearly to within fifteen thousand feet of the earth.

Fourthly, Purity of Color: The nearest of these clouds —those over the observer's head, being at least three miles above him, and nearly all entering the ordinary

sphere of vision, farther from him still,—their dark sides are much grayer and cooler than those of other clouds, owing to their distance. They are composed of the purest aqueous vapor, free from all foulness of earthy gases, and of this in the lightest and most ethereal state in which it can be, to be visible. Farther, they receive the light of the sun in a state of far greater intensity than lower objects, the beams being transmitted to them through atmospheric air far less dense, and wholly unaffected by mist, smoke, or any other impurity. Hence their colors are more pure and vivid, and their white less sullied than those of any other clouds.

§ 7. Causes of their peculiarly delicate coloring.

Lastly, Variety: Variety is never so conspicuous, as when it is united with symmetry. The perpetual change of form in other clouds, is monotonous in its very dissimilarity, nor is difference striking where no connection is implied; but if through a range of barred clouds, crossing half the heaven, all governed by the same forces and falling into one general form, there be yet a marked and evident dissimilarity between each member of the great mass—one more finely drawn, the next more delicately moulded, the next more gracefully bent—each broken into differently modelled and variously numbered groups, the variety is doubly striking, because contrasted with the perfect symmetry of which it forms a part. Hence, the importance of the truth, that nature never lets one of the members of even her most disciplined groups of cloud be like another; but though each is adapted for the same function, and in its great features resembles all the others, not one, out of the millions with which the sky is checkered, is without a separate beauty and character, appearing to have had distinct thought occupied in its conception, and distinct forces in its production; and in addition to this perpetual invention, visible in each member of each

§ 8. Their variety of form.

system, we find systems of separate cloud intersecting one another, the sweeping lines mingled and interwoven with the rigid bars, these in their turn melting into banks of sand-like ripple and flakes of drifted and irregular foam; under all, perhaps the massy outline of some lower cloud moves heavily across the motionless buoyancy of the upper lines, and indicates at once their elevation and their repose.

Such are the great attributes of the upper cloud region; whether they are beautiful, valuable, or impressive, it is not our present business to decide, nor to endeavor to discover the reason of the somewhat remarkable fact, that the whole field of ancient landscape art affords, as far as we remember, but one instance of any effort whatever to represent the character of this cloud region. That one instance is the landscape of Rubens in our own gallery, in which the mottled or fleecy sky is given with perfect truth and exquisite beauty. To this should perhaps be added, some of the backgrounds of the historical painters, where horizontal lines were required, and a few level bars of white or warm color cross the serenity of the blue. These, as far as they go, are often very perfect, and the elevation and repose of their effect might, we should have thought, have pointed out to the landscape painters that there was something (I do not say much, but certainly something) to be made out of the high clouds. Not one of them, however, took the hint. To whom, among them all, can we look for the slightest realization of the fine and faithful descriptive passage of the "Excursion," already alluded to:—

§ 9. Total absence of even the slightest effort at their representation, in ancient landscape.

> "But rays of light,
> Now suddenly diverging from the orb,
> Retired behind the mountain tops, or veiled
> By the dense air, shot upwards to the crown
> Of the blue firmament—aloft—and wide:

And multitudes of little floating clouds,
Ere we, who saw, of change were conscious, pierced
Through their ethereal texture, had become
Vivid as fire,—Clouds separately poised,
Innumerable multitude of forms
Scattered through half the circle of the sky;
And giving back, and shedding each on each,
With prodigal communion, the bright hues
Which from the unapparent fount of glory
They had imbibed, and ceased not to receive.
That which the heavens displayed the liquid deep
Repeated, but with unity sublime."

§ 10. The intense and constant study of them by Turner.

There is but one master whose works we can think of while we read this; one alone has taken notice of the neglected upper sky; it is his peculiar and favorite field; he has watched its every modification, and given its every phase and feature; at all hours, in all seasons, he has followed its passions and its changes, and has brought down and laid open to the world another apocalypse of heaven.

There is scarcely a painting of Turner's, in which serenity of sky and intensity of light are aimed at together, in which these clouds are not used, though there are not two cases in which they are used altogether alike. Sometimes they are crowded together in masses of mingling light, as in the Shylock; every part and atom sympathizing in that continuous expression of slow movement which Shelley has so beautifully touched:—

"Underneath the young gray dawn
A multitude of dense, white fleecy clouds,
Were wandering in thick flocks along the mountains,
Shepherded by the slow, unwilling wind."

At other times they are blended with the sky itself, felt only here and there by a ray of light calling them into existence out of its misty shade, as in the Mercury and Argus; sometimes, where great repose is to be given,

they appear in a few detached, equal, rounded flakes, which seem to hang motionless, each like the shadow of the other, in the deep blue of the zenith, as in the Acro-Corinth; sometimes they are scattered in fiery flying fragments, each burning with separate energy, as in the Temeraire; sometimes woven together with fine threads of intermediate darkness, melting into the blue as in the Napoleon. But in all cases the exquisite manipulation of the master gives to each atom of the multitude its own character and expression. Though they be countless as leaves, each has its portion of light, its shadow, its reflex, its peculiar and separating form.

§ 11. His vignette. Sunrise on the Sea.

Take for instance the illustrated edition of Rogers's Poems,* and open it at the 80th page, and observe how every attribute which I have pointed out in the upper sky, is there rendered with the faithfulness of a mirror; the long lines of parallel bars, the delicate curvature from the wind, which the inclination of the sail shows you to be from the west; the excessive sharpness of every edge which is turned to the wind, the faintness of every opposite one, the breaking up of each bar into rounded masses, and finally, the inconceivable variety with which individual form has been given to every member of the multitude, and not only individual form, but roundness and substance even where there is scarcely a hairbreadth of cloud to express it in. Observe, above everything, the varying indication of space and depth in the whole, so that you may look through and through from one cloud to another, feeling not merely how they retire to the horizon, but how they melt back into the recesses

* I use this work frequently for illustration, because it is the only one I know in which the engraver has worked with delicacy enough to give the real forms and touches of Turner. I can reason from these plates, (in questions of form only,) nearly as well as I could from the drawings.

of the sky; every interval being filled with absolute air, and all its spaces so melting and fluctuating, and fraught with change as with repose, that as you look, you will fancy that the rays shoot higher and higher into the vault of light, and that the pale streak of horizontal vapor is melting away from the cloud that it crosses. Now watch for the next barred sunrise, and take this vignette to the window, and test it by nature's own clouds, among which you will find forms and passages, I do not say merely *like*, but apparently the actual originals of parts of this very drawing. And with whom will you do this, except with Turner? Will you do it with Claude, and set that blank square yard of blue, with its round, white, flat fixtures of similar cloud, beside the purple infinity of nature, with her countless multitude of shadowy lines, and flaky waves, and folded veils of variable mist? Will you do it with Poussin, and set those massy steps of unyielding solidity, with the chariot-and-four driving up them, by the side of the delicate forms which terminate in threads too fine for the eye to follow them, and of texture so thin woven that the earliest stars shine through them? Will you do it with Salvator, and set that volume of violent and restless manufactory smoke beside those calm and quiet bars, which pause in the heaven as if they would never leave it more?

Now we have just seen how Turner uses the sharp-edged cirri when he aims at giving great transparency of air.

§ 12. His use of the cirrus in expressing mist.

But it was shown in the preceding chapter that sunbeams, or the appearance of them, are always sharper in their edge in proportion as the air is more misty, as they are most defined in a room where there is most dust flying about in it. Consequently, in the vignette we have been just noticing, where transparency is to be given, though there is a blaze of light, its beams are never edged; a tendency to

rays is visible, but you cannot in any part find a single marked edge of a rising sunbeam, the sky is merely more flushed in one place than another. Now let us see what Turner does when he wants mist. Turn to the Alps at Daybreak, page 193, in the same book. Here we have the cirri used again, but now they have no sharp edges, they are all fleecy and mingling with each other, though every one of them has the most exquisite indication of individual form, and they melt back, not till they are lost in exceeding light, as in the other plate, but into a mysterious, fluctuating, shadowy sky, of which, though the light penetrates through it all, you perceive every part to be charged with vapor. Notice particularly the half-indicated forms even where it is most serene, behind the snowy mountains. And now, how are the sunbeams drawn? no longer indecisive, flushing, palpitating, every one is sharp and clear, and terminated by definite shadow; note especially the marked lines on the upper cloud; finally, observe the difference in the mode of indicating the figures, which are here misty and indistinguishable, telling only as shadows, though they are near and large, while those in the former vignette came clear upon the eye, though they were so far off as to appear mere points.

§ 13. His consistency in every minor feature.

Now is this perpetual consistency in all points, this concentration of every fact which can possibly bear upon what we are to be told, this watchfulness of the entire meaning and system of nature, which fills every part and space of the picture with coincidences of witness, which come out upon us, as they would from the reality, more fully and deeply in proportion to the knowledge we possess and the attention we give, admirable or not? I could go on writing page after page on every sky of Turner's, and pointing out fresh truths in every one. In the Havre, for instance, of the Rivers of France we have a new fact

pointed out to us with respect to these cirri, namely, their being so faint and transparent as not to be distinguishable from the blue of the sky, (a frequent case,) except in the course of a sunbeam, which, however, does not illumine their edges, they being not solid enough to reflect light, but penetrates their whole substance, and renders them flat, luminous forms in its path, instantly and totally lost at its edge. And thus a separate essay would be required by every picture, to make fully understood the new phenomena which it treated and illustrated. But after once showing what are the prevailing characteristics of these clouds, we can only leave it to the reader to trace them wherever they occur. There are some fine and characteristic passages of this kind of cloud given by Stanfield, though he dares not use them in multitude, and is wanting in those refined qualities of form which it is totally impossible to explain in words, but which, perhaps, by simple outlines on a large scale, selected from the cloud forms of various artists, I may in following portions of the work illustrate with the pencil.

§ 14. The color of the upper clouds.

Of the colors of these clouds I have spoken before, (Sec. I. Chap. II.;) but though I then alluded to their purity and vividness, I scarcely took proper notice of their variety; there is indeed in nature variety in all things, and it would be absurd to insist on it in each case, yet the colors of these clouds are so marvellous in their changefulness, that they require particular notice. If you watch for the next sunset, when there are a considerable number of these cirri in the sky, you will see, especially at the zenith, that the sky does not remain of the same color for two inches together; one cloud has a dark side of cold blue, and a fringe of milky white; another, above it, has a dark side of purple and an edge of red; another, nearer the sun, has an under-side of orange and an edge of gold; these

you will find mingled with, and passing into the blue of the sky, which in places you will not be able to distinguish from the cool gray of the darker clouds, and which will be itself full of gradation, now pure and deep, now faint and feeble; and all this is done, not in large pieces, nor on a large scale, but over and over again in every square yard, so that there is no single part nor portion of the whole sky which has not in itself variety of color enough for a separate picture, and yet no single part which is like another, or which has not some peculiar source of beauty, and some peculiar arrangement of color of its own. Now, instead of this, you get in the old masters—Cuyp, or Claude, or whoever they may be—a field of blue, delicately, beautifully, and uniformly shaded down to the yellow sun, with a certain number of similar clouds, each with a dark side of the same gray, and an edge of the same yellow. I do not say that nature never does anything like this, but I say that her *principle* is to do a great deal more, and that what she does more than this,—what I have above described, and what you may see in nine sunsets out of ten,—has been observed, attempted, and rendered by Turner only, and by him with a fidelity and force which presents us with more essential truth, and more clear expression and illustration of natural laws, in every wreath of vapor, than composed the whole stock of heavenly information, which lasted Cuyp and Claude their lives.

§ 15. Recapitulation.

We close then our present consideration of the upper clouds, to return to them when we know what is beautiful; we have at present only to remember that of these clouds, and the truths connected with them, none before Turner had taken any notice whatsoever; that had they therefore been even feebly and imperfectly represented by him, they would yet have given him a claim to be considered more ex-

tended and universal in his statement of truths than any of his predecessors; how much more when we find that deep fidelity in his studied and perfect skies which opens new sources of delight to every advancement of our knowledge, and to every added moment of our contemplation.

CHAPTER III.

OF TRUTH OF CLOUDS:—SECONDLY, OF THE CENTRAL CLOUD REGION.

We have next to investigate the character of the Central Cloud Region, which I consider as including all clouds which are the usual characteristic of ordinary serene weather, and which touch and envelop the mountains of Switzerland, but never affect those of our own island; they may therefore be considered as occupying a space of air ten thousand feet in height, extending from five to fifteen thousand feet above the sea.

§ 1. Extent and typical character of the central cloud region.

These clouds, according to their elevation, appear with great variety of form, often partaking of the streaked or mottled character of the higher region, and as often, when the precursors of storm, manifesting forms closely connected with the lowest rain clouds; but the species especially characteristic of the central region is a white, ragged, irregular, and scattered vapor, which has little form and less color, and of which a good example may be seen in the largest landscape of Cuyp, in the Dulwich Gallery. When this vapor collects into masses, it is partially rounded, clumsy, and ponderous, as if it would tumble out of the sky, shaded with a dull gray, and totally devoid of any appearance of energy or motion. Even in nature, these clouds are comparatively uninteresting, scarcely worth raising our heads to look at; and on canvas, valuable only as a means of introducing light, and breaking the monotony of blue; yet they are, per-

haps, beyond all others the favorite clouds of the Dutch masters. Whether they had any motive for the adoption of such materials, beyond the extreme facility with which acres of canvas might thus be covered without any troublesome exertion of thought; or any temptation to such selections beyond the impossibility of error where nature shows no form, and the impossibility of deficiency where she shows no beauty, it is not here the place to determine. Such skies are happily beyond the reach of criticism, for he who tells you nothing cannot tell you a falsehood. A little flake-white, glazed with a light brush over the carefully toned blue, permitted to fall into whatever forms chance might determine, with the single precaution that their edges should be tolerably irregular, supplied, in hundreds of instances, a sky quite good enough for all ordinary purposes—quite good enough for cattle to graze, or boors to play at nine-pins—and equally devoid of all that could gratify, inform, or offend.

§ 2. Its characteristic clouds, requiring no attention nor thought for their representation, are therefore favorite subjects with the old masters.

But although this kind of cloud is, as I have said, typical of the central region, it is not one which nature is fond of. She scarcely ever lets an hour pass without some manifestation of finer forms, sometimes approaching the upper cirri, sometimes the lower cumulus. And then in the lower outlines, we have the nearest approximation which nature ever presents to the clouds of Claude, Salvator, and Poussin, to the characters of which I must request especial attention, as it is here only that we shall have a fair opportunity of comparing their skies with those of the modern school. I shall, as before, glance rapidly at the great laws of specific form, and so put it in the power of the reader to judge for himself of the truth of representation.

§ 3. The clouds of Salvator and Poussin.

Clouds, it is to be remembered, are not so much local

vapor, as vapor rendered locally visible by a fall of temperature. Thus a cloud, whose parts are in constant motion, will hover on a snowy mountain, pursuing constantly the same track upon its flanks, and yet remaining of the same size, the same form, and in the same place, for half a day together. No matter how violent or how capricious the wind may be, the instant it approaches the spot where the chilly influence of the snow extends, the moisture it carries becomes visible, and then and there the cloud forms on the instant, apparently maintaining its form against the wind, though the careful and keen eye can see all its parts in the most rapid motion across the mountain. The outlines of such a cloud are of course not determined by the irregular impulses of the wind, but by the fixed lines of radiant heat which regulate the temperature of the atmosphere of the mountain. It is terminated, therefore, not by changing curves, but by steady right lines of more or less decision, often exactly correspondent with the outline of the mountain on which it is formed, and falling therefore into grotesque peaks and precipices. I have seen the marked and angular outline of the Grandes Jorasses, at Chamounix, mimicked in its every jag by a line of clouds above it. Another resultant phenomenon is the formation of cloud in the calm air to leeward of a steep summit; cloud whose edges are in rapid motion, where they are affected by the current of the wind above, and stream from the peak like the smoke of a volcano, yet always vanish at a certain distance from it as steam issuing from a chimney. When wet weather of some duration is approaching, a small white spot of cloud will sometimes appear low on the hill flanks; it will not move, but will increase gradually for some little time, then diminish, still without moving; disappear altogether, reappear ten minutes afterwards, exactly in the same spot; increase to a greater extent than before, again

§ 4. Their essential characters.

disappear, again return, and at last permanently; other similar spots of cloud forming simultaneously, with various fluctuations, each in its own spot, and at the same level on the hill-side, until all expand, join together, and form an unbroken veil of threatening gray, which darkens gradually into storm. What in such cases takes place palpably and remarkably, is more or less a law of formation in all clouds whatsoever; they being bounded rather by lines expressive of changes of temperature in the atmosphere, than by the impulses of the currents of wind in which those changes take place. Even when in rapid and visible motion across the sky, the variations which take place in their outlines are not so much alterations of position and arrangement of parts, as they are the alternate formation and disappearance of parts. There is, therefore, usually a parallelism and consistency in their great outlines, which give system to the smaller curves of which they are composed; and if these great lines be taken, rejecting the minutiæ of variation, the resultant form will almost always be angular, and full of character and decision. In the flock-like fields of equal masses, each individual mass has the effect, not of an ellipse or circle, but of a rhomboid; the sky is crossed and checkered, not honeycombed; in the lower cumuli, even though the most rounded of all clouds, the groups are not like balloons or bubbles, but like towers or mountains. And the result of this arrangement in masses more or less angular, varied with, and chiefly constructed of, curves of the utmost freedom and beauty, is that appearance of exhaustless and fantastic energy which gives every cloud a marked character of its own, suggesting resemblances to the specific outlines of organic objects. I do not say that such accidental resemblances are a character to be imitated; but merely that they bear witness to the originality and vigor of separate concep-

§ 5. Their angular forms and general decision of outline.

tion in cloud forms, which give to the scenery of the sky a force and variety no less delightful than that of the changes of mountain outline in a hill district of great elevation; and that there is added to this a spirit-like feeling, a capricious, mocking imagery of passion and life, totally different from any effects of inanimate form that the earth can show.

§ 6. The composition of their minor curves.

The minor contours, out of which the larger outlines are composed, are indeed beautifully curvilinear; but they are never monotonous in their curves. First comes a concave line, then a convex one, then an angular jag, breaking off into spray, then a downright straight line, then a curve again, then a deep gap, and a place where all is lost and melted away, and so on; displaying in every inch of the form renewed and ceaseless invention, setting off grace with rigidity, and relieving flexibility with force, in a manner scarcely less admirable, and far more changeful than even in the muscular forms of the human frame. Nay, such is the exquisite composition of all this, that you may take any single fragment of any cloud in the sky, and you will find it put together as if there had been a year's thought over the plan of it, arranged with the most studied inequality—with the most delicate symmetry—with the most elaborate contrast, a picture in itself. You may try every other piece of cloud in the heaven, and you will find them every one as perfect, and yet not one in the least like another.

§ 7. Their characters, as given by S. Rosa.

Now it may perhaps, for anything we know, or have yet proved, be highly expedient and proper, in art, that this variety, individuality, and angular character should be changed into a mass of convex curves, each precisely like its neighbor in all respects, and unbroken from beginning to end;—it may be highly original, masterly, bold, whatever you choose to call it; but it is *false*. I do not take

upon me to assert that the clouds which in ancient Germany were more especially and peculiarly devoted to the business of catching princesses off desert islands, and carrying them to enchanted castles, might not have possessed something of the pillowy organization which we may suppose best adapted for functions of such delicacy and dispatch. But I do mean to say that the clouds which God sends upon his earth as the ministers of dew, and rain, and shade, and with which he adorns his heaven, setting them in its vault for the thrones of his spirits, have not in one instant or atom of their existence, one feature in common with such conceptions and creations. And there are, beyond dispute, more direct and unmitigated falsehoods told, and more laws of nature set at open defiance in *one* of the "rolling" skies of Salvator, such as that marked 159 in the Dulwich Gallery, than were ever attributed, even by the ignorant and unfeeling, to all the wildest flights of Turner put together.

§ 8. Monotony and falsehood of the clouds of the Italian school generally.

And it is not as if the error were only occasional. It is systematic and constant in all the Italian masters of the seventeenth century, and in most of the Dutch. They looked at clouds as at everything else which did not particularly help them in their great end of deception, with utter carelessness and bluntness of feeling,—saw that there were a great many rounded passages in them,—found it much easier to sweep circles than to design beauties, and sat down in their studies, contented with perpetual repetitions of the same spherical conceptions, having about the same relation to the clouds of nature, that a child's carving of a turnip has to the head of the Apollo. Look at the round things about the sun in the bricky Claude, the smallest of the three Seaports in the National Gallery. They are a great deal more like half-crowns than clouds. Take the ropy, tough-looking wreath in the Sacrifice of Isaac, and find one part of it, if

you can, which is not the repetition of every other part of it, all together being as round and vapid as the brush could draw them; or take the two cauliflower-like protuberances in No. 220 of the Dulwich Gallery, and admire the studied similarity between them; you cannot tell which is which; or take the so-called Nicholas Poussin, No. 212, Dulwich Gallery, in which, from the brown trees to the right-hand side of the picture, there is not one line which is not physically impossible.

§ 9. Vast size of congregated masses of cloud.

But it is not the outline only which is thus systematically false. The drawing of the solid form is worse still, for it is to be remembered that although clouds of course arrange themselves more or less into broad masses, with a light side and dark side, both their light and shade are invariably composed of a series of divided masses, each of which has in its outline as much variety and character as the great outline of the cloud; presenting, therefore, a thousand times repeated, all that I have described as characteristic of the general form. Nor are these multitudinous divisions a truth of slight importance in the character of sky, for they are dependent on, and illustrative of, a quality which is usually in a great degree overlooked, — the enormous retiring spaces of solid clouds. Between the illumined edge of a heaped cloud, and that part of its body which turns into shadow, there will generally be a clear distance of several miles, more or less of course, according to the general size of the cloud, but in such large masses as in Poussin and others of the old masters, occupy the fourth or fifth of the visible sky; the clear illumined breadth of vapor, from the edge to the shadow, involves at least a distance of five or six miles. We are little apt, in watching the changes of a mountainous range of cloud, to reflect that the masses of vapor which compose it, are huger and higher than any mountain range of the earth; and the

distances between mass and mass are not yards of air traversed in an instant by the flying form, but valleys of changing atmosphere leagues over; that the slow motion of ascending curves, which we can scarcely trace, is a boiling energy of exulting vapor rushing into the heaven a thousand feet in a minute; and that the toppling angle whose sharp edge almost escapes notice in the multitudinous forms around it, is a nodding precipice of storms, 3,000 feet from base to summit. It is not until we have actually compared the forms of the sky with the hill ranges of the earth, and seen the soaring Alp overtopped and buried in one surge of the sky, that we begin to conceive or appreciate the colossal scale of the phenomena of the latter. But of this there can be no doubt in the mind of any one accustomed to trace the forms of clouds among hill ranges—as it is there a demonstrable and evident fact, that the space of vapor visibly extended over an ordinarily cloudy sky, is not less, from the point nearest to the observer to the horizon, than twenty leagues; that the size of every mass of separate form, if it be at all largely divided, is to be expressed in terms of *miles;* and that every boiling heap of illuminated mist in the nearer sky, is an enormous mountain, fifteen or twenty thousand feet in height, six or seven miles over an illuminated surface, furrowed by a thousand colossal ravines, torn by local tempests into peaks and promontories, and changing its features with the majestic velocity of the volcano.

§ 10. Demonstrable by comparison with mountain ranges.

To those who have once convinced themselves of these proportions of the heaven, it will be immediately evident, that though we might, without much violation of truth, omit the minor divisions of a cloud four yards over, it is the veriest audacity of falsehood to omit those of masses where for yards we have to read miles; first, because it is physically impossible that such a space should be without many and

§ 11. And consequent divisions and varieties of feature.

vast divisions; secondly, because divisions at such distances must be sharply and forcibly marked by aerial perspective, so that not only they must be there, but they must be visible and evident to the eye; and thirdly, because these multitudinous divisions are absolutely necessary, in order to express this space and distance, which cannot but be fully and imperfectly felt, even with every aid and evidence that art can give of it.

§ 12. Not lightly to be omitted.

Now if an artist taking for his subject a chain of vast mountains, several leagues long, were to unite all their varieties of ravine, crag, chasm, and precipice, into one solid, unbroken mass, with one light side and one dark side, looking like a white ball or parallelopiped two yards broad, the words "breadth," "boldness," or "generalization," would scarcely be received as a sufficient apology for a proceeding so glaringly false, and so painfully degrading. But when, instead of the really large and simple forms of mountains, united, as they commonly are, by some great principle of common organization, and so closely resembling each other as often to correspond in line, and join in effect; when instead of this, we have to do with spaces of cloud twice as vast, broken up into a multiplicity of forms necessary to, and characteristic of, their very nature—those forms subject to a thousand local changes, having no association with each other, and rendered visible in a thousand places by their own transparency or cavities, where the mountain forms would be lost in shade,—that this far greater space, and this far more complicated arrangement, should be all summed up into one round mass, with one swell of white, and one flat side of unbroken gray, is considered an evidence of the sublimest powers in the artist of generalization and breadth. Now it may be broad, it may be grand, it may be beautiful, artistical, and in every way desirable. I don't say it is not—I merely say it is a concentration of every kind

of falsehood: it is depriving heaven of its space, clouds of their buoyancy, winds of their motion, and distance of its blue.

This is done, more or less, by all the old masters, without an exception.* Their idea of clouds was altogether similar; more or less perfectly carried out, according to their power of hand and accuracy of eye, but universally the same in conception. It was the idea of a comparatively small, round, puffed-up white body, irregularly associated with other round and puffed-up white bodies, each with a white light side, and a gray dark side, and a soft reflected light, floating a great way below a blue dome. Such is the idea of a cloud formed by most people; it is the first, general, uncultivated notion of what we see every day. People think of the clouds as about as large as they look—forty yards over, perhaps; they see generally that they are solid bodies subject to the same laws as other solid bodies, roundish, whitish, and apparently suspended a great way under a high blue concavity. So that these ideas be tolerably given with smooth paint, they are content, and call it nature. How different it is from anything that nature ever did, or ever will do, I have endeavored to show; but I cannot, and do not, expect the contrast to be fully felt, unless the reader will actually go out on days when, either before or after rain, the clouds arrange themselves into vigorous masses, and after arriving at something like a conception of their distance and size, from the mode in which they retire over the horizon, will for himself trace and watch their varieties of form and outline, as mass rises over mass in their illuminated bodies. Let him climb from step to step over their craggy and broken slopes, let him plunge into the long vistas of immeasur-

§ 13. Imperfect conceptions of this size and extent in ancient landscape.

* Here I include even the great ones—even Titian and Veronese,—excepting only Tintoret and the religious schools.

able perspective, that guide back to the blue sky; and when he finds his imagination lost in their immensity, and his senses confused with their multitude, let him go to Claude, to Salvator, or to Poussin, and ask them for a like space, or like infinity.

§ 14. Total want of transparency and evanescence in the clouds of ancient landscape.

But perhaps the most grievous fault of all, in the clouds of these painters, is the utter want of transparency. Not in her most ponderous and lightless masses will nature ever leave us without some evidence of transmitted sunshine; and she perpetually gives us passages in which the vapor becomes visible only by the sunshine which it arrests and holds within itself, not caught on its surface, but entangled in its mass—floating fleeces, precious with the gold of heaven; and this translucency is especially indicated on the dark sides even of her heaviest wreaths, which possess opalescent and delicate hues of partial illumination, far more dependent upon the beams which pass through them than on those which are reflected upon them. Nothing, on the contrary, can be more painfully and ponderously opaque than the clouds of the old masters universally. However far removed in aerial distance, and however brilliant in light, they never appear filmy or evanescent, and their light is always *on* them, not *in* them. And this effect is much increased by the positive and persevering determination on the part of their outlines not to be broken in upon, nor interfered with in the slightest degree, by any presumptuous blue, or impertinent winds. There is no inequality, no variation, no losing or disguising of line, no melting into nothingness, nor shattering into spray; edge succeeds edge with imperturbable equanimity, and nothing short of the most decided interference on the part of tree-tops, or the edge of the picture, prevents us from being able to follow them all the way round, like the coast of an island.

§ 15. Farther proof of their deficiency in space.

And be it remembered that all these faults and deficiencies are to be found in their drawing merely of the separate masses of the solid cumulus, the easiest drawn of all clouds. But nature scarcely ever confines herself to such masses; they form but the thousandth part of her variety of effect. She builds up a pyramid of their boiling volumes, bars this across like a mountain with the gray cirrus, envelops it in black, ragged, drifting vapor, covers the open part of the sky with mottled horizontal fields, breaks through these with sudden and long sunbeams, tears up their edges with local winds, scatters over the gaps of blue the infinity of multitude of the high cirri, and melts even the unoccupied azure into palpitating shades. And all this is done over and over again in every quarter of a mile. Where Poussin or Claude have three similar masses, nature has fifty pictures, made up each of millions of minor thoughts—fifty aisles penetrating through angelic chapels to the Shechinah of the blue—fifty hollow ways among bewildered hills—each with their own nodding rocks, and cloven precipices, and radiant summits, and robing vapors, but all unlike each other, except in beauty, all bearing witness to the unwearied, exhaustless operation of the Infinite Mind. Now, in cases like these especially, as we observed before of general nature, though it is altogether hopeless to follow out in the space of any one picture this incalculable and inconceivable glory, yet the painter can at least see that the space he has at his command, narrow and confined as it is, is made complete use of, and that no part of it shall be without entertainment and food for thought. If he could subdivide it by millionths of inches, he could not reach the multitudinous majesty of nature; but it is at least incumbent upon him to make the most of what he has, and not, by exaggerating the proportions, banishing the variety and repeating the

forms of his clouds, to set at defiance the eternal principles of the heavens—fitfulness and infinity. And now let us, keeping in memory what we have seen of Poussin and Salvator, take up one of Turner's skies and see whether *he* is as narrow in his conception, or as niggardly in his space. It does not matter which we take, his sublime Babylon* is a fair example for our present purpose. Ten miles away, down the Euphrates, where it gleams last along the plain, he gives us a drift of dark elongated vapor, melting beneath into a dim haze which embraces the hills on the horizon. It is exhausted with its own motion, and broken up by the wind in its own body into numberless groups of billowy and tossing fragments, which, beaten by the weight of storm down to the earth, are just lifting themselves again on wearied wings, and perishing in the effort. Above these, and far beyond them, the eye goes back to a broad sea of white, illuminated mist, or rather cloud melted into rain, and absorbed again before that rain has fallen, but penetrated throughout, whether it be vapor or whether it be dew, with soft sunshine, turning it as white as snow. Gradually as it rises, the rainy fusion ceases, you cannot tell where the film of blue on the left begins—but it is deepening, deepening still,—and the cloud, with its edge first invisible, then all but imaginary, then just felt when the eye is *not* fixed on it, and lost when it is, at last rises, keen from excessive distance, but soft and mantling in its body, as a swan's bosom fretted by faint wind, heaving fitfully against the delicate deep blue, with white waves, whose forms are traced by the pale lines of opalescent shadow, shade only because the light is within it, and not upon it, and which break with their own swiftness into a driven line of level spray, winnowed into threads by the wind, and flung before the following vapor like those

§ 16. Instance of perfect truth in the sky of Turner's Babylon.

* Engraved in Findel's Bible Illustrations.

swift shafts of arrowy water which a great cataract shoots into the air beside it, trying to find the earth. Beyond these, again, rises a colossal mountain of gray cumulus, through whose shadowed sides the sunbeams penetrate in dim, sloping, rain-like shafts; and over which they fall in a broad burst of streaming light, sinking to the earth, and showing through their own visible radiance the three successive ranges of hills which connect its desolate plain with space. Above, the edgy summit of the cumulus, broken into fragments, recedes into the sky, which is peopled in its serenity with quiet multitudes of the white, soft, silent cirrus; and under these again, drift near the zenith, disturbed and impatient shadows of a darker spirit, seeking rest and finding none.

Now this is nature! It is the exhaustless living energy with which the universe is filled; and what will you set beside it of the works of other men? Show me a single picture, in the whole compass of ancient art, in which I can pass from cloud to cloud, from region to region, from first to second and third heaven, as I can here, and you may talk of Turner's want of truth. Turn to the Pools of Solomon, and walk through the passages of mist as they melt on the one hand into those stormy fragments of fiery cloud, or, on the other, into the cold solitary shadows that compass the sweeping hill, and when you find an inch without air and transparency, and a hairbreadth without changefulness and thought; and when you can count the torn waves of tossing radiance that gush from the sun, as you can count the fixed, white, insipidities of Claude; or when you can measure the modulation and the depth of that hollow mist, as you can the flourishes of the brush upon the canvas of Salvator, talk of Turner's want of truth!

§ 17. And in his Pools of Solomon.

But let us take up simpler and less elaborate works, for there is too much in these to admit of being analyzed.

In the vignette of the Lake of Como, in Rogers's Italy,

the space is so small that the details have been partially lost by the engraver; but enough remain to illustrate the great principles of cloud from which we have endeavored to explain. Observe first the general angular outline of the volumes on the left of the sun. If you mark the points where the direction of their outline changes, and connect those points by right lines, the cloud will touch, but will not cut, those lines throughout. Yet its contour is as graceful as it is full of character—toppling, ready to change—fragile as enormous—evanescent as colossal. Observe how, where it crosses the line of the sun, it becomes luminous, illustrating what has been observed of the visibility of mist in sunlight. Observe, above all, the multiplicity of its solid form, the depth of its shadows in perpetual transition; it is not round and swelled, half light and half dark, but full of breaking irregular shadow and transparency—variable as the wind, and melting imperceptibly above into the haziness of the sun-lighted atmosphere, contrasted in all its vast forms with the delicacy and the multitude of the brightly touched cirri. Nothing can surpass the truth of this; the cloud is as gigantic in its simplicity as the Alp which it opposes; but how various, how transparent, how infinite in its organization!

§ 18. Truths of outline and character in his Como.

I would draw especial attention, both here and in all other works of Turner, to the beautiful use of the low horizontal bars or fields of cloud, (cirro-stratus,) which associate themselves so frequently—more especially before storms—with the true cumulus, floating on its flanks, or capping it, as if it were a mountain, and seldom mingling with its substance, unless in the very formation of rain. They supply us with one of those beautiful instances of natural composition, by which the artist is superseded and excelled—for, by the occurrence of these horizontal

§ 19. Association of the cirrostratus with the cumulus.

flakes, the rolling form of the cumulus is both opposed in its principal lines, and gifted with an apparent solidity and vastness, which no other expedient could have exhibited, and which far exceed in awfulness the impression of the noblest mountains of the earth. I have seen in the evening light of Italy, the Alps themselves outtowered by ranges of these mighty clouds, alternately white in the starlight, and inhabited by fire.

§ 20. The deep-based knowledge of the Alps in Turner's Lake of Geneva.

Turn back to the first vignette in the Italy. The angular outlines and variety of modulation in the clouds above the sail, and the delicate atmosphere of morning into which they are dissolved about the breathing hills, require no comment; but one part of this vignette demands especial notice; it is the repetition of the outline of the snowy mountain by the light cloud above it. The cause of this I have already explained (vide page 343,) and its occurrence here is especially valuable as bearing witness to the thorough and scientific knowledge thrown by Turner into his slightest works. The thing cannot be seen once in six months; it would not have been noticed, much less introduced, by an ordinary artist, and to the public it is a dead letter, or an offence. Ninety-nine persons in a hundred would not have observed this pale wreath of parallel cloud above the hill, and the hundredth in all probability says it is unnatural. It requires the most intimate and accurate knowledge of the Alps before such a piece of refined truth can be understood.

§ 21. Further principles of cloud form exemplified in his Amalfi.

At the 216th page we have another and a new case, in which clouds in perfect repose, unaffected by wind, or any influence but that of their own elastic force, boil, rise, and melt in the heaven with more approach to globular form than under any other circumstances is possible. I name this vignette, not only because it is most re-

markable for the buoyancy and elasticity of inward energy, indicated through the most ponderous forms, and affords us a beautiful instance of the junction of the cirrostratus with the cumulus, of which we have just been speaking (§ 19,) but because it is a characteristic example of Turner's use of one of the facts of nature not hitherto noticed, that the edge of a partially transparent body is often darker than its central surface, because at the edge the light penetrates and passes through, which from the centre is reflected to the eye. The sharp, cutting edge of a wave, if not broken into foam, frequently appears for an instant almost black: and the outlines of these massy clouds, where their projecting forms rise in relief against the light of their bodies, are almost always marked clearly and firmly by very dark edges. Hence we have frequently, if not constantly, multitudinous forms indicated only by outline, giving character and solidity to the great masses of light, without taking away from their breadth. And Turner avails himself of these boldly and constantly,—outlining forms with the brush of which no other indication is given. All the grace and solidity of the white cloud on the right-hand side of the vignette before us, depend upon such outlines.

§ 22. Reasons for insisting on the *infinity* of Turner's works. Infinity is almost an unerring test of *all* truth.

As I before observed of mere execution, that one of the best tests of its excellence was the expression of *infinity;* so it may be noticed with respect to the painting of details generally, that more difference lies between one artist and another, in the attainment of this quality, than in any other of the efforts of art; and that if we wish, without reference to beauty of composition, or any other interfering circumstances, to form a judgment of the truth of painting, perhaps the very first thing we should look for, whether in one thing or another—foliage, or clouds, or waves—should be the ex-

pression of *infinity* always and everywhere, in all parts and division of parts. For we may be quite sure that what is not infinite, cannot be true; it does not, indeed, follow that what is infinite, always is true, but it cannot be altogether false, for this simple reason; that it is impossible for mortal mind to compose an infinity of any kind for itself, or to form an idea of perpetual variation, and to avoid all repetition, merely by its own combining resources. The moment that we trust to ourselves, we repeat ourselves, and therefore the moment we see in a work of any kind whatsoever, the expression of infinity, we may be certain that the workman has gone to nature for it; while, on the other hand, the moment we see repetition, or want of infinity, we may be certain that the workman has *not* gone to nature for it.

§ 23. Instances of the total want of it in the works of Salvator.

For instance, in the picture of Salvator before noticed, No. 220 in the Dulwich Gallery, as we see at once that the two masses of cloud absolutely repeat each other in every one of their forms, and that each is composed of about twelve white sweeps of the brush, all forming the same curve, and all of the same length; and as we can count these, and measure their common diameter, and by stating the same to anybody else, convey to him a full and perfect idea and knowledge of that sky in all its parts and proportions,—as we can do this, we may be absolutely certain, without reference to the real sky, or to any other part of nature, without even knowing what the white things were intended for, we may be certain that they cannot possibly resemble *anything;* that whatever they were meant for, they can be nothing but a violent contradiction of all nature's principles and forms. When, on the other hand, we take up such a sky as that of Turner's Rouen, seen from St. Catherine's Hill, in the Rivers of France, and find, in the first place, that he has given us a distance over the hills in the horizon,

into which, when we are tired of penetrating, we must turn and come back again, there being not the remotest chance of getting to the end of it; and when we see that from this measureless distance up to the zenith, the whole sky is one ocean of alternate waves of cloud and light, so blended together that the eye cannot rest on any one without being guided to the next, and so to a hundred more, till it is lost over and over again in every wreath—that if it divides the sky into quarters of inches, and tries to count or comprehend the component parts of any single one of those divisions, it is still as utterly defied and defeated by the part as by the whole—that there is not one line out of the millions there which repeats another, not one which is unconnected with another, not one which does not in itself convey histories of distance and space, and suggest new and changeful form; then we may be all but certain, though these forms are too mysterious and too delicate for us to analyze—though all is so crowded and so connected that it is impossible to test any single part by particular laws—yet without any such tests, we may be sure that this infinity can only be based on truth—that it *must* be nature, because man could not have originated it, and that every form must be faithful, because none is like another. And therefore it is that I insist so constantly on this great quality of landscape painting, as it appears in Turner; because it is not merely a constant and most important truth in itself, but it almost amounts to a demonstration of every other truth. And it will be found a far rarer attainment in the works of other men than is commonly supposed, and the sign, wherever it is really found, of the very highest art. For we are apt to forget that the greatest *number* is no nearer infinity than the least, if it be definite number:

§ 24. And of the universal presence of it in those of Turner. The conclusions which may be arrived at from it.

§ 25. The multiplication of objects, or increase of their size, will not give the impression of infinity, but is the resource of novices.

and the vastest bulk is no nearer infinity than the most minute, if it be definite bulk; so that a man may multiply his objects forever and ever, and be no nearer infinity than he had reached with one, if he do not vary them and confuse them; and a man may reach infinity in every touch and line, and part, and unit, if in these he be truthfully various and obscure. And we shall find, the more we examine the works of the old masters, that always, and in all parts, they are totally wanting in every feeling of infinity, and therefore in *all* truth: and even in the works of the moderns, though the aim is far more just, we shall frequently perceive an erroneous choice of means, and a substitution of mere number or bulk for real infinity.

§ 26. Further instances of infinity in the gray skies of Turner.

And therefore, in concluding our notice of the central cloud region, I should wish to dwell particularly on those skies of Turner's in which we have the whole space of the heaven covered with the delicate dim flakes of gathering vapor, which are the intermediate link between the central region and that of the rain-cloud, and which assemble and grow out of the air; shutting up the heaven with a gray interwoven veil, before the approach of storm, faint, but universal, letting the light of the upper sky pass pallidly through their body, but never rending a passage for the ray. We have the first approach and gathering of this kind of sky most gloriously given in the vignette at page 115 of Rogers's Italy, which is one of the most perfect pieces of feeling (if I may transgress my usual rules for an instant) extant in art, owing to the extreme grandeur and stern simplicity of the strange and ominous forms of level cloud behind the building. In that at page 223, there are passages of the same kind, of exceeding perfection. The sky through which the dawn is breaking in the Voyage of Columbus, and that with the Moonlight under the Rialto, in Rogers's Poems,

the skies of the Bethelehem, and the Pyramids in Finden's Bible series, and among the Academy pictures, that of the Hero and Leander, and Flight into Egypt, are characteristic and noble examples, as far as any individual works can be characteristic of the universality of this mighty mind. I ought not to forget the magnificent solemnity and fulness of the wreaths of gathering darkness in the Folkestone.

§ 27. The excellence of the cloud-drawing of Stanfield.

We must not pass from the consideration of the central cloud region without noticing the general high quality of the cloud-drawing of Stanfield. He is limited in his range, and is apt in extensive compositions to repeat himself, neither is he ever very refined; but his cloud-form is firmly and fearlessly chiselled, with perfect knowledge, though usually with some want of feeling. As far as it goes, it is very grand and very tasteful, beautifully developed in the space of its solid parts and full of action. Next to Turner, he is incomparably the noblest master of cloud-form of all our artists; in fact, he is the only one among them who really can *draw* a cloud. For it is a very different thing to rub out an irregular white space neatly with the handkerchief, or to leave a bright little bit of paper in the middle of a wash, than to give the real anatomy of cloud-form with perfect articulation of chiaroscuro. We have multitudes of painters who can throw a light bit of straggling vapor across their sky, or leave in it delicate and tender passages of breaking light; but this is a very different thing from taking up each of those bits or passages, and giving it structure, and parts, and solidity. The eye is satisfied with exceedingly little, as an indication of cloud, and a few clever sweeps of the brush on wet paper may give all that it requires; but this is not *drawing* clouds, nor will it ever appeal fully and deeply to the mind, except when it occurs only as a part of a

§ 28. The average standing of the English school.

higher system. And there is not one of our modern artists, except Stanfield, who can do much more than this. As soon as they attempt to lay detail upon their clouds they appear to get bewildered, forget that they are dealing with forms regulated by precisely the same simple laws of light and shade as more substantial matter, overcharge their color, confuse their shadows and dark sides, and end in mere ragged confusion. I believe the evil arises from their never attempting to render clouds except with the brush; other objects, at some period of study, they take up with the chalk or lead, and so learn something of their form; but they appear to consider clouds as altogether dependent on cobalt and camel's hair, and so never understand anything of their real anatomy. But whatever the cause, I cannot point to any central clouds of the moderns, except those of Turner and Stanfield, as really showing much knowledge of, or feeling for, nature, though *all* are superior to the conventional and narrow conceptions of the ancients. We are all right as far as we go, our work may be incomplete, but it is not false; and it is far better, far less injurious to the mind, that we should be little attracted to the sky, and taught to be satisfied with a light suggestion of truthful form, than that we be drawn to it by violently pronounced outline and intense color, to find in its finished falsehood everything to displease or to mislead—to hurt our feelings, if we have foundation for them, and corrupt them, if we have none.

CHAPTER IV.

OF TRUTH OF CLOUDS: THIRDLY, OF THE REGION OF THE RAIN-CLOUD.

THE clouds which I wish to consider as characteristic of the lower, or rainy region, differ not so much in their real nature from those of the central and uppermost regions, as in appearance, owing to their greater nearness. For the central clouds, and perhaps even the high cirri, deposit moisture, if not distinctly rain, as is sufficiently proved by the existence of snow on the highest peaks of the Himaleh; and when, on any such mountains, we are brought into close contact with the central clouds,* we find them little differing from the ordinary rain-cloud of the plains, except by being slightly less dense and dark. But the apparent differences, dependent on proximity, are most marked and important.

§ 1. The apparent difference in character between the lower and central clouds is dependent chiefly on proximity.

In the first place, the clouds of the central region have, as has been before observed, pure and aerial grays for their dark sides, owing to the necessary distance from the observer; and as this distance permits a multitude of local phenomena capable of influencing color, such as accidental sunbeams,

§ 2. Their marked difference in color.

* I am unable to say to what height the real rain-cloud may extend; perhaps there are no mountains which rise altogether above storm. I have never been in a violent storm at a greater height than between 8,000 and 9,000 feet above the level of the sea. There the rain-cloud is exceedingly light, compared to the ponderous darkness of the lower air.

refractions, transparencies, or local mists and showers, to be collected into a space comparatively small, the colors of these clouds are always changeful and palpitating; and whatever degree of gray or of gloom may be mixed with them is invariably pure and aerial. But the nearness of the rain-cloud rendering it impossible for a number of phenomena to be at once visible, makes its hue of gray monotonous, and (by losing the blue of distance) warm and brown compared to that of the upper clouds. This is especially remarkable on any part of it which may happen to be illumined, which is of a brown, bricky, ochreous tone, never bright, always coming in dark outline on the lights of the central clouds. But it is seldom that this takes place, and when it does, never over large spaces, little being usually seen of the rain-cloud but its under and dark side. This, when the cloud above is dense, becomes of an inky and cold gray, and sulphureous and lurid if there be thunder in the air.

§ 3. And in definiteness of form.

With these striking differences in color, it presents no fewer nor less important in form, chiefly from losing almost all definiteness of character and outline. It is sometimes nothing more than a thin mist, whose outline cannot be traced, rendering the landscape locally indistinct or dark; if its outline be visible, it is ragged and torn; rather a spray of cloud, taken off its edge and sifted by the wind, than an edge of the cloud itself. In fact, it rather partakes of the nature, and assumes the appearance, of real water in the state of spray, than of elastic vapor. This appearance is enhanced by the usual presence of formed rain, carried along with it in a columnar form, ordinarily, of course, reaching the ground like a veil, but very often suspended with the cloud, and hanging from it like a jagged fringe, or over it in light, rain being always lighter than the cloud it falls from. These columns, or

fringes, of rain are often waved and bent by the wind, or twisted, sometimes even swept upwards from the cloud. The velocity of these vapors, though not necessarily in reality greater than that of the central clouds, appears greater, owing to their proximity, and, of course, also to the usual presence of a more violent wind. They are also apparently much more in the power of the wind, having less elastic force in themselves; but they are precisely subject to the same great laws of form which regulate the upper clouds. They are not solid bodies borne about with the wind, but they carry the wind with them, and cause it. Every one knows, who has ever been out in a storm, that the time when it rains heaviest is precisely the time when he cannot hold up his umbrella; that the wind is carried with the cloud, and lulls when it has passed. Every one who has ever seen rain in a hill country, knows that a rain-cloud, like any other, may have all its parts in rapid motion, and yet, as a whole, remain in one spot. I remember once, when in crossing the Tête Noire, I had turned up the valley towards Trient, I noticed a rain-cloud forming on the Glacier de Trient. With a west wind, it proceeded towards the Col de Balme, being followed by a prolonged wreath of vapor, always forming exactly at the same spot over the glacier. This long, serpent-like line of cloud went on at a great rate till it reached the valley leading down from the Col de Balme, under the slate rocks of the Croix de Fer. There it turned sharp round, and came down this valley, at right angles to its former progress, and finally directly contrary to it, till it came down within five hundred feet of the village, where it disappeared; the line behind always advancing, and always disappearing, at the same spot. This continued for half an hour, the long line describing the curve of a horseshoe; always coming into existence, and always vanishing at exactly the same

§ 4. They are subject to precisely the same great laws.

places; traversing the space between with enormous swiftness. This cloud, ten miles off, would have looked like a perfectly motionless wreath, in the form of a horseshoe hanging over the hills.

§ 5. Value to the painter, of the rain-cloud.

To the region of the rain-cloud belong also all those phenomena of drifted smoke, heat-haze, local mists in the morning or evening; in valleys, or over water, mirage, white steaming vapor rising in evaporation from moist and open surfaces, and everything which visibly affects the condition of the atmosphere without actually assuming the form of cloud. These phenomena are as perpetual in all countries as they are beautiful, and afford by far the most effective and valuable means which the painter possesses, for modification of the forms of fixed objects. The upper clouds are distinct and comparatively opaque, they do not modify, but conceal; but through the rain-cloud, and its accessory phenomena, all that is beautiful may be made manifest, and all that is hurtful concealed; what is paltry may be make to look vast, and what is ponderous, aerial; mystery may be obtained without obscurity, and decoration without disguise. And, accordingly, nature herself uses it constantly, as one of her chief means of most perfect effect; not in one country, nor another, but everywhere—everywhere, at least, where there is anything worth calling landscape. I cannot answer for the desert of the Sahara, but I know that there can be no greater mistake, than supposing that delicate and variable effects of mist and rain-cloud are peculiar to northern climates. I have never seen in any place or country effects of mist more perfect than in the Campagna of Rome, and among the hills of Sorrento. It is therefore matter of no little marvel to me, and I conceive that it can scarcely be otherwise to any reflecting person, that throughout the whole range of ancient landscape art, there occurs no instance of the painting of

a real rain-cloud, still less of any of the more delicate phenomena characteristic of the region. "Storms" indeed, as the innocent public persist in calling such abuses of nature and abortions of art as the two windy Gaspars in our National Gallery, are common enough; massive concretions of ink and indigo, wrung and twisted very hard, apparently in a vain effort to get some moisture out of them; bearing up courageously and successfully against a wind, whose effects on the trees in the foreground can be accounted for only on the supposition that they are all of the India-rubber species. Enough of this in all conscience we have, and to spare; but for the legitimate rain-cloud, with its ragged and spray-like edge, its veilly transparency, and its columnar burden of blessing, neither it, nor anything like it, or approaching it, occurs in any painting of the old masters that I have ever seen; and I have seen enough to warrant my affirming that if it occur anywhere, it must be through accident rather than intention. Nor is there stronger evidence of any perception, on the part of these much respected artists, that there were such things in the world as mists or vapors. If a cloud under their direction ever touches a mountain, it does it effectually and as if it meant to do it. There is no mystifying the matter; here is a cloud, and there is a hill; if it is to come on at all, it comes on to some purpose, and there is no hope of its ever going off again. We have, therefore, little to say of the efforts of the old masters, in any scenes which might naturally have been connected with the clouds of the lowest region, except that the faults of form specified in considering the central clouds, are, by way of being energetic or sublime, more glaringly and audaciously committed in their "storms;" and that what is a wrong form among clouds possessing form, is there given with increased

§ 6. The old masters have not left a single instance of the painting of the rain-cloud, and very few efforts at it. Gaspar Poussin's storms.

generosity of fiction to clouds which have no form at all.

§ 7. The great power of the moderns in this respect.

Supposing that we had nothing to show in modern art, of the region of the rain-cloud, but the dash of Cox, the blot of de Wint, or even the ordinary stormy skies of the body of our inferior water-color painters, we might yet laugh all efforts of the old masters to utter scorn. But one among our water-color artists, deserves especial notice—before we ascend the steps of the solitary throne—as having done in his peculiar walk, what for faithful and pure truth, truth indeed of a limited range and unstudied application, but yet most faithful and most pure, will remain unsurpassed if not unrivalled,—Copley Fielding.

§ 8. Works of Copley Fielding.

We are well aware how much of what he has done depends in a great degree upon particular tricks of execution, or on a labor somewhat too mechanical to be meritorious; that it is rather the *texture* than the *plan* of his sky which is to be admired, and that the greater part of what is pleasurable in it will fall rather under the head of dexterous imitation than of definite thought. But whatever detractions from his merit we may be compelled to make on these grounds, in considering art as the embodying of beauty, or the channel of mind, it is impossible, when we are speaking of truth only, to pass by his down scenes and moorland showers, of some years ago, in which he produced some of the most perfect and faultless passages of mist and rain-cloud which art has ever seen. Wet, transparent, formless, full of motion, felt rather by their shadows on the hills than by their presence in the sky, becoming dark only through increased depth of space, most translucent where most sombre, and light only through increased buoyancy of motion, letting the blue through their interstices, and the sunlight through their chasms, with the irregular

§ 9. His peculiar truth.

playfulness and traceless gradation of nature herself, his skies will remain, as long as their colors stand, among the most simple, unadulterated, and complete transcripts of a particular nature which art can point to. Had he painted five instead of five hundred such, and gone on to other sources of beauty, he might, there can be little doubt, have been one of our greatest artists. But it often grieves us to see how his power is limited to a particular moment, to that easiest moment for imitation, when knowledge of form may be superseded by management of the brush, and the judgment of the colorist by the manufacture of a color; the moment when all form is melted down and drifted away in the descending veil of rain, and when the variable and fitful colors of the heaven are lost in the monotonous gray of its storm tones.* We can only account for this by supposing that there is something radically wrong in his method of study; for a man of his evident depth of feeling and pure love of truth ought not to be, cannot be, except from some strange error in his mode of out-of-door practice, thus limited in his range, and liable to decline of power. We have little doubt that almost all such failures arise from the artist's neglecting the use of the chalk, and supposing that either the power of drawing forms, or the sense of their beauty, can be maintained unweakened or un-

§ 10. His weakness and its probable cause.

* I ought here, however, to have noted another effect of the rain-cloud, which, so far as I know, has been rendered only by Copley Fielding. It is seen chiefly in clouds gathering for rain, when the sky is entirely covered with a gray veil rippled or waved with pendent swells of soft texture, but excessively hard and liny in their edges. I am not sure that this is an agreeable or impressive form of the rain-cloud, but it is a frequent one, and it is often most faithfully given by Fielding; only in some cases the edges becoming a little doubled and harsh have given a look of failure or misadventure to some even of the best studied passages; and something of the same hardness of line is occasionally visible in his drawing of clouds by whose nature it is not warranted.

blunted, without constant and laborious studies in simple light and shade, of form only. The brush is at once the artist's greatest aid and enemy; it enables him to make his power available, but at the same time, it undermines his power, and unless it be constantly rejected for the pencil, never can be rightly used. But whatever the obstacle be, we do not doubt that it is one which, once seen, may be overcome or removed; and we are in the constant hope of seeing this finely-minded artist shake off his lethargy, break the shackles of habit, seek in extended and right study the sources of real power, and become, what we have full faith in his capability of being, one of the leading artists of his time.

§ 11. Impossibility of reasoning on the rain-clouds of Turner from engravings.

In passing to the works of our greatest modern master, it must be premised that the qualities which constitute a most essential part of the truth of the rain-cloud, are in no degree to be rendered by engraving. Its indefiniteness of torn and transparent form is far beyond the power of even our best engravers: I do not say beyond their *possible* power, if they would make themselves artists as well as workmen, but far beyond the power they actually possess; while the depth and delicacy of the grays which Turner employs or produces, as well as the refinement of his execution, are, in the nature of things, utterly beyond all imitation by the opaque and lifeless darkness of the steel. What we say of his works, therefore, must be understood as referring only to the original drawings; though we may name one or two instances in which the engraver has, to a certain degree, succeeded in distantly following the intention of the master.

Jumieges, in the Rivers of France, ought perhaps, after what we have said of Fielding, to be our first object of attention, because it is a rendering by Turner of

Fielding's particular moment, and the only one existing, for Turner never repeats himself. One picture is allotted to one truth; the statement is perfectly and gloriously made, and he passes on to speak of a fresh portion of God's revelation.* The haze of sunlit rain of this most magnificent picture, the gradual retirement of the dark wood into its depth, and the sparkling and evanescent light which sends its variable flashes on the abbey, figures, foliage, and foam, require no comment—they speak home at once. But there is added to this noble composition an incident which may serve us at once for a farther illustration of the nature and forms of cloud, and for a final proof how deeply and philosophically Turner has studied them.

§ 12. His rendering of Fielding's particular moment in the Jumieges.

§ 13. Illustration of the nature of clouds in the opposed forms of smoke and steam.

We have on the right of the picture, the steam and the smoke of a passing steamboat. Now steam is nothing but an artificial cloud in the process of dissipation; it is as much a cloud as those of the sky itself, that is, a quantity of moisture rendered visible in the air by imperfect solution. Accordingly, observe how exquisitely irregular and broken are its forms, how sharp and spray-like; but with all the facts observed which were pointed out in Chap. II. of this Section, the convex side to the wind, the sharp edge on that side, the other soft and lost. Smoke, on the contrary, is an actual substance existing independently in the air, a solid opaque body, subject to no absorption nor dissipation but that of tenuity. Observe its volumes; there is no breaking up nor disappearing here; the wind carries its elastic globes before it, but does not dissolve nor break them.†

* Compare Sect. I. Chap. IV. § 5.

† It does not do so until the volumes lose their density by inequality of motion, and by the expansion of the warm air which conveys them. They are then, of course, broken into forms resembling those of clouds.

Equally convex and void of angles on all sides, they are the exact representatives of the clouds of the old masters, and serve at once to show the ignorance and falsehood of these latter, and the accuracy of study which has guided Turner to the truth.

§ 14. Moment of retiring rain in the Llanthony.

From this picture we should pass to the Llanthony,* which is the rendering of the moment immediately following that given in the Jumieges. The shower is here half exhausted, half passed by, the last drops are rattling faintly through the glimmering hazel boughs, the white torrent, swelled by the sudden storm, flings up its hasty jets of springing spray to meet the returning light; and these, as if the heaven regretted what it had given, and were taking it back, pass, as they leap, into vapor, and fall not again, but vanish in the shafts of the sunlight †—hurrying, fitful, wind-woven sunlight—which glides through the thick leaves, and paces along the pale rocks like rain; half conquering, half quenched by the very mists which it summons itself from the lighted pastures as it passes, and gathers out of the drooping herbage and from the streaming crags; sending them with messages of peace to the far summits of the yet unveiled mountains whose silence is still broken by the sound of the rushing rain.

* No conception can be formed of this picture from the engraving. It is perhaps the most marvellous piece of execution and of gray color existing, except perhaps the drawing presently to be noticed, Land's End. Nothing else can be set beside it, even of Turner's own works —much less of any other man's.

† I know no effect more strikingly characteristic of the departure of a storm than the *smoking* of the mountain torrents. The exhausted air is so thirsty of moisture, that every jet of spray is seized upon by it, and converted into vapor as it springs; and this vapor rises so densely from the surface of the stream as to give it the exact appearance of boiling water. I have seen the whole course of the Arve at Chamounix one line of dense cloud, dissipating as soon as it had risen ten or twelve feet from the surface, but entirely concealing the water from an observer placed above it.

With this noble work we should compare one of which we can better judge by the engraving—the Loch Coriskin, in the illustrations to Scott, because it introduces us to another and a most remarkable instance of the artist's vast and varied knowledge. When rain falls on a mountain composed chiefly of barren rocks, their surfaces, being violently heated by the sun, whose most intense warmth always precedes rain, occasion sudden and violent evaporation, actually converting the first shower into steam. Consequently, upon all such hills, on the commencement of rain, white volumes of vapor are instantaneously and universally formed, which rise, are absorbed by the atmosphere, and again descend in rain, to rise in fresh volumes until the surfaces of the hills are cooled. Where there is grass or vegetation, this effect is diminished; where there is foliage it scarcely takes place at all. Now this effect has evidently been especially chosen by Turner for Loch Coriskin, not only because it enabled him to relieve its jagged forms with veiling vapor, but to tell the tale which no pencilling could, the story of its utter absolute barrenness of unlichened, dead, desolated rock:—

§ 15. And of commencing, chosen with peculiar meaning for Loch Coriskin.

> "The wildest glen, but this, can show
> Some touch of nature's genial glow,
> On high Benmore green mosses grow,
> And health-bells bud in deep Glencoe.
> And copse on Cruchan Ben;
> But here, above, around, below,
> On mountain, or in glen,
> Nor tree, nor plant, nor shrub, nor flower,
> Nor aught of vegetative power,
> The wearied eye may ken;
> But all its rocks at random thrown,
> Black waves, bare crags, and banks of stone."
>
> LORD OF THE ISLES, Canto III.

Here, again, we see the absolute necessity of scientific and entire acquaintance with nature, before this great artist can be understood. That which, to the ignorant, is little more than an unnatural and meaningless confusion of steam-like vapor, is to the experienced such a full and perfect expression of the character of the spot, as no means of art could have otherwise given.

§ 16. The drawing of transparent vapor in the Land's End.

In the Long Ships Lighthouse, Land's End, we have clouds without rain—at twilight—enveloping the cliffs of the coast, but concealing nothing, every outline being visible through their gloom; and not only the outline—for it is easy to do this—but the *surface*. The bank of rocky coast approaches the spectator inch by inch, felt clearer and clearer as it withdraws from the garment of cloud—not by edges more and more defined, but by a surface more and more unveiled. We have thus the painting, not of a mere transparent veil, but of a solid body of cloud, every inch of whose increasing distance is marked and felt. But the great wonder of the picture is the intensity of gloom which is attained in pure warm gray, without either blackness or blueness. It is a gloom dependent rather on the enormous space and depth indicated, than on actual pitch of color, distant by real drawing, without a grain of blue, dark by real substance, without a stroke of blackness; and with all this, it is not formless, but full of indications of character, wild, irregular, shattered, and indefinite—full of the energy of storm, fiery in haste, and yet flinging back out of its motion the fitful swirls of bounding drift, of tortured vapor tossed up like men's hands, as in defiance of the tempest, the jets of resulting whirlwind, hurled back from the rocks into the face of the coming darkness; which, beyond all other characters, mark the raised passion of the elements. It is this untraceable, unconnected, yet perpetual form—this fulness of character absorbed in the

universal energy—which distinguish nature and Turner from all their imitators. To roll a volume of smoke before the wind, to indicate motion or violence by monotonous similarity of line and direction, is for the multitude; but to mark the independent passion, the tumultuous separate existence of every wreath of writhing vapor, yet swept away and overpowered by one omnipotence of storm, and thus to bid us

§ 17. The individual character of its parts.

> "Be as a Presence or a motion—one
> Among the many there——while the mists
> Flying, and rainy vapors, call out shapes
> And phantoms from the crags and solid earth,
> As fast as a musician scatters sounds
> Out of an instrument,"—

this belongs only to nature and to him.

The drawing of Coventry may be particularized as a farther example of this fine suggestion of irregularity and fitfulness, through very constant parallelism of direction, both in rain and clouds. The great mass of cloud, which traverses the whole picture, is characterized throughout by severe right lines, nearly parallel with each other, into which every one of its wreaths has a tendency to range itself; but no one of these right lines is actually and entirely parallel to any other, though all have a certain tendency, more or less defined in each, which impresses the mind with the most distinct *idea* of parallelism. Neither are any of the lines actually straight and unbroken; on the contrary, they are all made up of the most exquisite and varied curves, and it is the imagined line which joins the apices of these—a tangent to them all, which is in reality straight.* They are suggested, not represented, right lines; but the whole volume of

§ 18. Deep studied form of swift raincloud in the Coventry.

* Note especially the dark uppermost outline of the mass.

cloud is visibly and totally bounded by them; and, in consequence, its whole body is felt to be dragged out and elongated by the force of the tempest which it carries with it, and every one of its wreaths to be (as was before explained) not so much something borne *before* or *by* the wind, as the visible form and presence of the wind itself. We could not possibly point out a more magnificent piece of drawing as a contrast to such works of Salvator as that before alluded to (159 Dulwich Gallery). Both are rolling masses of connected cloud; but in Turner's, there is not one curve that repeats another, nor one curve in itself monotonous, nor without character, and yet every part and portion of the cloud is rigidly subjected to the same forward, fierce, inevitable influence of storm. In Salvator's, every curve repeats its neighbor, every curve is monotonous in itself, and yet the whole cloud is curling about hither and thither, evidently without the slightest notion where it is going to, and unregulated by any general influence whatsoever. I could not bring together two finer or more instructive examples, the one of everything that is perfect, the other of everything that is childish or abominable, in the representation of the same facts.

§ 19. Compared with forms given by Salvator.

But there is yet more to be noticed in this noble sky of Turner's. Not only are the lines of the rolling cloud thus irregular in their parallelism, but those of the falling rain are equally varied in their direction, indicating the gusty changefulness of the wind, and yet kept so straight and stern in their individual descent, that we are not suffered to forget its strength. This impression is still further enhanced by the drawing of the smoke, which blows every way at once, yet turning perpetually in each of its swirls back in the direction of the wind, but so suddenly and violently, as almost to assume the angular lines

§ 20. Entire expression of tempest by minute touches and circumstances in the Coventry.

of lightning. Farther, to complete the impression, be it observed that all the cattle, both upon the near and distant hill-side, have left off grazing, and are standing stock still and stiff, with their heads down and their backs to the wind; and finally, that we may be told not only what the storm is, but what it has been, the gutter at the side of the road is gushing in a complete torrent, and particular attention is directed to it by the full burst of light in the sky being brought just above it, so that all its waves are bright with the reflection.

§ 21. Especially by contrast with a passage of extreme repose.

But I have not quite done with this noble picture yet. Impetuous clouds, twisted rain, flickering sunshine, fleeting shadow, gushing water, and oppressed cattle, all speak the same story of tumult, fitfulness, power, and velocity. Only one thing is wanted, a passage of repose to contrast with it all, and it is given. High and far above the dark volumes of the swift rain-cloud, are seen on the left, through their opening, the quiet, horizontal, silent flakes of the highest cirrus, resting in the repose of the deep sky. Of all else that we have noticed in this drawing, some faint idea can be formed from the engraving: but not the slightest of the delicate and soft forms of these pausing vapors, and still less of the exquisite depth and palpitating tenderness of the blue with which they are islanded. Engravers, indeed, invariably lose the effect of all passages of cold color, under the mistaken idea that it is to be kept *pale* in order to indicate distance; whereas it ought commonly to be darker than the rest of the sky.

§ 22. The truth of this particular passage. Perfectly pure blue sky only seen after rain, and how seen.

To appreciate the full truth of this passage, we must understand another effect peculiar to the rain-cloud, that its openings exhibit the purest blue which the sky ever shows. For, as we saw in the first chapter of this section, that aqueous vapor always turns the sky more or less gray, it follows that we never can see the

azure so intense as when the greater part of this vapor has just fallen in rain. Then, and then only, pure blue sky becomes visible in the first openings, distinguished especially by the manner in which the clouds melt into it; their edges passing off in faint white threads and fringes, through which the blue shines more and more intensely, till the last trace of vapor is lost in its perfect color. It is only the upper white clouds, however, which do this, or the last fragments of rain-clouds, becoming white as they disappear, so that the blue is never *corrupted* by the cloud, but only paled and broken with pure white, the purest white which the sky ever shows. Thus we have a melting and palpitating color, never the same for two inches together, deepening and broadening here and there into intensity of perfect azure, then drifted and dying away through every tone of pure pale sky, into the snow white of the filmy cloud. Over this roll the determined edges of the rain clouds, throwing it all far back, as a retired scene, into the upper sky. Of this effect the old masters, as far as I remember, have taken no cognizance whatsoever; all with them is, as we partially noticed before, either white cloud or pure blue: they have no notion of any double-dealing or middle measures. They bore a hole in the sky, and let you up into a pool of deep, stagnant blue, marked off by the clear round edges of imperturbable, impenetrable cloud on all sides—beautiful in positive color, but totally destitute of that exquisite gradation and change, that fleeting, panting, hesitating effort, with which the first glance of the natural sky is shed through the turbulence of the earth-storm.

§ 23. Absence of this effect in the works of the old masters.

They have some excuse, however, for not attempting this, in the nature of their material, as one accidental dash of the brush with water-color on a piece of wet or damp paper, will come nearer the truth and transparency of this rain-blue than the labor of a day in oils;

and the purity and felicity of some of the careless, melting, water-color skies of Cox and Tayler may well make us fastidious in all effects of this kind. It is, however, only in the drawings of Turner that we have this perfect transparency and variation of blue, given in association with the perfection of considered form. In Tayler and Cox the forms are always partially accidental and unconsidered, often essentially bad, and always incomplete; in Turner the dash of the brush is as completely under the rule of thought and feeling as its slowest line; all that it does is perfect, and could not be altered, even in a hairbreadth, without injury; in addition to this, peculiar management and execution are used in obtaining quality in the color itself, totally different from the manipulation of any other artist; and none, who have ever spent so much as one hour of their lives over his drawing, can forget those dim passages of dreamy blue, barred and severed with a thousand delicate and soft and snowy forms, which, gleaming in their patience of hope between the troubled rushing of the racked earth-cloud, melt farther and farther back into the height of heaven, until the eye is bewildered and the heart lost in the intensity of their peace. I do not say that this is beautiful—I do not say it is ideal, nor refined—I only ask you to watch for the first opening of the clouds after the next south rain, and tell me if it be not *true?*

§ 24. Success of our water-color artists in its rendering. Use of it by Turner.

The Gosport affords us an instance more exquisite even than the passage above named in the Coventry, of the use of this melting and dewy blue, accompanied by two distances of rain-cloud, one towering over the horizon, seen blue with excessive distance through crystal atmosphere; the other breaking overhead in the warm, sulphurous fragments of spray, whose loose and shattering transparency, being the most essential characteristic of the near rain-

§ 25. Expression of near rain-cloud in the Gosport and other works.

cloud, is precisely that which the old masters are sure to contradict. Look, for instance, at the wreaths of *cloud?* in the Dido and Æneas of Gaspar Poussin, with their unpleasant edges cut as hard and solid and opaque and smooth as thick black paint can make them, rolled up over one another like a dirty sail badly reefed; or look at the agreeable transparency and variety of the cloud-edge where it cuts the Mountain in N. Poussin's Phocion, and compare this with the wreaths which float across the precipice in the second vignette in Campbell, or which gather around the Ben Lomond, the white rain gleaming beneath their dark transparent shadows; or which drift up along the flanks of the wooded hills, called from the river by the morning light, in the Oakhampton; or which island the crags of Snowdon in the Llanberis, or melt along the Cumberland hills, while Turner leads us across the sands of Morecambe Bay. This last drawing deserves especial notice; it is of an evening in spring, when the south rain has ceased at sunset, and through the lulled and golden air, the confused and fantastic mists float up along the hollows of the mountains, white and pure, the resurrection in spirit of the new-fallen rain, catching shadows from the precipices, and mocking the dark peaks with their own mountain-like but melting forms till the solid mountains seem in motion like those waves of cloud, emerging and vanishing as the weak wind passes by their summits; while the blue, level night advances along the sea, and the surging breakers leap up to catch the last light from the path of the sunset.

§ 26. Contrasted with Gaspar Poussin's rain-cloud in the Dido and Æneas.

I need not, however, insist upon Turner's peculiar power of rendering *mist*, and all those passages of intermediate mystery, between earth and air, when the mountain is melting into the cloud, or the horizon into the twilight;

§ 27. Turner's power of rendering mist.

because his supremacy in these points is altogether undisputed, except by persons to whom it would be impossible to prove anything which did not fall under the form of a Rule of Three. Nothing is more natural than that the studied form and color of this great artist should be little understood, because they require for the full perception of their meaning and truth, such knowledge and such time as not one in a thousand possesses, or can bestow; but yet the truth of them for that very reason is capable of demonstration, and there is hope of our being able to make it in some degree felt and comprehended even by those to whom it is now a dead letter, or an offence. But the aerial and misty effects of landscape, being matters of which the eye should be simply cognizant, and without effort of thought, as it is of light, must, where they are exquisitely rendered, either be felt at once, or prove that degree of blindness and bluntness in the feelings of the observer which there is little hope of ever conquering. Of course for persons who have never seen in their lives a cloud vanishing on a mountain-side, and whose conceptions of mist or vapor are limited to ambiguous outlines of spectral hackney-coaches and bodiless lamp-posts, discerned through a brown combination of sulphur, soot, and gaslight, there is yet some hope; we cannot, indeed, tell them what the morning mist is like in mountain air, but far be it from us to tell them that they are incapable of feeling its beauty if they will seek it for themselves. But if you have ever in your life had one opportunity, with your eyes and heart open, of seeing the dew rise from a hill-pasture, or the storm gather on a sea-cliff, and if you have yet no feeling for the glorious passages of mingled earth and heaven which Turner calls up before you into breathing, tangible being, there is indeed no hope for your apathy—art will never touch you, nor nature inform.

§ 23. His effects of mist so perfect, that if not at once understood, they can no more be explained or reasoned on than nature herself.

It would be utterly absurd, among the innumerable passages of this kind given throughout his works, to point to one as more characteristic or more perfect than another. The Simmer Lake, near Askrig, for expression of mist pervaded with sunlight,—the Lake Lucerne, a recent and unengraved drawing, for the recession of near mountain form, not into dark, but into *luminous* cloud, the most difficult thing to do in art,—the Harlech, for expression of the same phenomena, shown over vast spaces in distant ranges of hills, the Ehrenbreitstein, a recent drawing, for expression of mist, rising from the surface of water at sunset,—and, finally, the glorious Oberwesel and Nemi,* for passages of all united, may, however, be named, as noble instances, though in naming five works I insult five hundred.

§ 29. Various instances.

One word respecting Turner's more violent storms, for we have hitherto been speaking only of the softer rain-clouds, associated with gusty tempest, but not of the thunder-cloud and the whirlwind. If there be any one point in which engravers disgrace themselves more than in another, it is in their rendering of dark and furious storm. It appears to be utterly impossible to force it into their heads, that an artist does *not* leave his color with a sharp edge and an angular form by accident, or that they may have the pleasure of altering it and improving upon it; and equally impossible to persuade them that energy and gloom may in *some* circumstances be arrived at without any extraordinary expenditure of ink. I am aware of no engraver of the present day whose ideas of a storm-cloud are not comprised under two heads, roundness and blackness; and, indeed, their general principles of translation (as may be distinctly gathered from their larger works) are the following: 1. Where the drawing is

§ 30. Turner's more violent effects of tempest are never rendered by engravers.

§ 31. General system of landscape engraving.

* In the possession of B. G. Windus, Esq., of Tottenham.

gray, make the paper black. 2. Where the drawing is white, cover the page with zigzag lines. 3. Where the drawing has particularly tender tones, cross-hatch them. 4. Where any outline is particularly angular, make it round. 5. Where there are vertical reflections in water, express them with very distinct horizontal lines. 6. Where there is a passage of particular simplicity, treat it in sections. 7. Where there is anything intentionally concealed, make it out. Yet, in spite of the necessity which all engravers impose upon themselves, of rigidly observing this code of general laws, it is difficult to conceive how such pieces of work as the plates of Stonehenge and Winchelsea, can ever have been presented to the public, as in any way resembling, or possessing even the most fanciful relation to the Turner drawings of the same subjects. The original of the Stonehenge is perhaps the standard of storm-drawing, both for the overwhelming power and gigantic proportions and spaces of its cloud-forms, and for the tremendous qualities of lurid and sulphurous colors which are gained in them. All its forms are marked with violent angles, as if the whole muscular energy—so to speak—of the cloud, were writhing in every fold, and their fantastic and fiery volumes have a peculiar horror—an awful life—shadowed out in their strange, swift, fearful outlines, which oppress the mind more than even the threatening of their gigantic gloom. The white lightning, not as it is drawn by less observant or less capable painters, in zigzag fortifications, but in its own dreadful irregularity of streaming fire, is brought down, not merely over the dark clouds, but through the full light of an illumined opening to the blue, which yet cannot abate the brilliancy of its white line; and the track of the last flash along the ground is fearfully marked by the dog howling over the fallen shepherd, and the ewe pressing her head upon the body of her dead lamb.

§ 32. The storm in the Stonehenge.

I have not space, however, to enter into examination of Turner's storm-drawing; I can only warn the public against supposing that its effect is ever rendered by engravers. The great principles of Turner are angular outline, vastness and energy of form, infinity of gradation, and depth without blackness. The great principles of the engravers (*vide* Pæstum, in Rogers's Italy, and the Stonehenge, above alluded to) are rounded outline, no edges, want of character, equality of strength, and blackness without depth.

§ 33. General character of such effects as given by Turner. His expression of falling rain.

I have scarcely, I see, on referring to what I have written, sufficiently insisted on Turner's rendering of the rainy *fringe*, whether in distances, admitting or concealing more or less of the extended plain, as in the Waterloo, and Richmond (with the girl and dog in the foreground), or as in the Dunstaffnage, Glencoe, St. Michael's Mount, and Slave-ship, not reaching the earth, but suspended in waving and twisted lines from the darkness of the zenith. But I have no time for farther development of particular points; I must defer discussion of them until we take up each picture to be viewed as a whole; for the division of the sky which I have been obliged to make, in order to render fully understood the peculiarities of character in the separate cloud regions, prevents my speaking of any one work with justice to its concentration of various truth. Be it always remembered that we pretend not, at present, to give any account or idea of the sum of the works of any painter, much less of the universality of Turner's; but only to explain in what real truth, as far as it is explicable, consists, and to illustrate it by those pictures in which it most distinctly occurs, or from which it is most visibly absent. And it will only be in the full and separate discussion of individual works, when we are acquainted also with what is beautiful, that we shall be

§ 34. Recapitulation of the section.

completely able to prove or disprove the presence of the truth of nature.

The conclusion, then, to which we are led by our present examination of the truth of clouds, is, that the old masters attempted the representation of only one among the thousands of their systems of scenery, and were altogether false in the little they attempted; while we can find records in modern art of every form or phenomenon of the heavens, from the highest film that glorifies the ether to the wildest vapor that darkens the dust, and in all these records we find the most clear language and close thought, firm words, and true message, unstinted fulness and unfailing faith.

And indeed it is difficult for us to conceive how, even without such laborious investigation as we have gone through, any person can go to nature for a single day or hour, when she is really at work in any of her nobler spheres of action, and yet retain respect for the old masters; finding, as find he will, that every scene which rises, rests, or departs before him, bears with it a thousand glories of which there is not one shadow, one image, one trace or line, in any of their works; but which will illustrate to him, at every new instant, some passage which he had not before understood in the high works of modern art. Stand upon the peak of some isolated mountain at daybreak, when the night mists first rise from off the plains, and watch their white and lake-like fields as they float in level bays and winding gulfs about the islanded summits of the lower hills, untouched yet by more than dawn, colder and more quiet than a windless sea under the moon of midnight; watch when the first sunbeam is sent upon the silver channels, how the foam of their undulating surface parts and passes away; and down under their depths, the glittering city and green pasture lie like Atlantis, be-

§ 35. Sketch of a few of the skies of nature, taken as a whole, compared with the works of Turner and of the old masters. Morning on the plains.

tween the white paths of winding rivers; the flakes of light falling every moment faster and broader among the starry spires, as the wreathed surges break and vanish above them, and the confused crests and ridges of the dark hills shorten their gray shadows upon the plain.

§ 36. Noon with gathering storms.

Has Claude given this? Wait a little longer, and you shall see those scattered mists rallying in the ravines, and floating up toward you, along the winding valleys, till they couch in quiet masses, iridescent with the morning light,* upon the broad breasts of the higher hills, whose leagues of massy undulation will melt back and back into that robe of material light, until they fade away, lost in its lustre, to appear again above, in the serene heaven, like a wild, bright, impossible dream, foundationless and inaccessible, their very bases vanishing in the unsubstantial and mocking blue of the deep lake below.† Has Claude given this? Wait yet a little longer, and you shall see those mists gather themselves into white towers, and stand like fortresses along the promontories, massy and motionless, only piled with every instant higher and higher into the sky,‡ and casting longer shadows athwart the rocks; and out of the pale blue of the horizon you will see forming and advancing a troop of narrow, dark, pointed vapors,§ which will cover the sky, inch by inch, with their gray network, and take the light off the landscape with an eclipse which will stop the singing of the birds and the motion of the leaves together; and then

* I have often seen the white, thin, morning cloud, edged with the seven colors of the prism. I am not aware of the cause of this phenomenon, for it takes place not when we stand with our backs to the sun, but in clouds near the sun itself, irregularly and over indefinite spaces, sometimes taking place in the body of the cloud. The colors are distinct and vivid, but have a kind of metallic lustre upon them.

† Lake Lucerne.

‡ St. Maurice (Rogers's Italy).

§ Vignette, the Great St. Bernard.

you will see horizontal bars of black shadow forming under them, and lurid wreaths create themselves, you know not how, along the shoulders of the hills; you never see them form, but when you look back to a place which was clear an instant ago, there is a cloud on it, hanging by the precipices, as a hawk pauses over his prey.* Has Claude given this? And then you will hear the sudden rush of the awakened wind, and you will see those watch-towers of vapor swept away from their foundations, and waving curtains of opaque rain let down to the valleys, swinging from the burdened clouds in black, bending fringes,† or pacing in pale columns along the lake level, grazing its surface into foam as they go. And then, as the sun sinks, you shall see the storm drift for an instant from off the hills, leaving their broad sides smoking, and loaded yet with snow-white torn, steam-like rags of capricious vapor, now gone, now gathered again;‡ while the smouldering sun, seeming not far away, but burning like a red-hot ball beside you, and as if you could reach it, plunges through the rushing wind and rolling cloud with headlong fall, as if it meant to rise no more, dyeing all the air about it with blood.§ Has Claude given this? And then you shall hear the fainting tempest die in the hollow of the night, and you shall see a green halo kindling on the summit of the eastern hills,‖ brighter—brighter yet, till the large white circle of the slow moon is lifted up among the barred clouds,¶ step by step, line by line; star after star she quenches with her kindling light, setting in their stead an army of pale, penetrable,

§ 37. Sunset in tempest. Serene midnight.

* Vignette of the Andes.

† St. Michael's Mount—England series.

‡ Illustration to the Antiquary. Goldeau, a recent drawing of the highest order.

§ Vignette to Campbell's Last Man.

‖ Caerlaverock.

¶ St. Denis.

fleecy wreaths in the heaven, to give light upon the earth, which move together, hand in hand, company by company, troop by troop, so measured in their unity of motion, that the whole heaven seems to roll with them, and the earth to reel under them. Ask Claude, or his brethren, for that. And then wait yet for one hour, until the east again becomes purple,* and the heaving mountains, rolling against it in darkness, like waves of a wild sea, are drowned one by one in the glory of its burning; watch the white glaciers blaze in their winding paths about the mountains, like mighty serpents with scales of fire; watch the columnar peaks of solitary snow, kindling downwards, chasm by chasm, each in itself a new morning; their long avalanches cast down in keen streams brighter than the lightning, sending each his tribute of driven snow, like altar-smoke, up to the heaven; the rose-light of their silent domes flushing that heaven about them and above them, piercing with purer light through its purple lines of lifted cloud, casting a new glory on every wreath as it passes by, until the whole heaven—one scarlet canopy,—is interwoven with a roof of waving flame, and tossing, vault beyond vault, as with the drifted wings of many companies of angels; and then, when you can look no more for gladness, and when you are bowed down with fear and love of the Maker and Doer of this, tell me who has best delivered this His message unto men!

§ 38. And sunrise on the Alps.

* Alps at Daybreak (Rogers's Poems :) Delphi, and various vignettes.

CHAPTER V.

EFFECTS OF LIGHT RENDERED BY MODERN ART.

I HAVE before given my reasons (Sect. II. Chap. III.) for not wishing at present to enter upon the discussion of particular effects of light. Not only are we incapable of rightly viewing them, or reasoning upon them, until we are acquainted with the principles of the beautiful; but, as I distinctly limited myself, in the present portion of the work, to the examination of *general* truths, it would be out of place to take cognizance of the particular phases of light, even if it were possible to do so, before we have some more definite knowledge of the material objects which they illustrate. I shall therefore, at present, merely set down a rough catalogue of the effects of light at different hours of the day, which Turner has represented: naming a picture or two, as an example of each, which we will hereafter take up one by one, and consider the physical science and the feeling together. And I do this, in the hope that, in the meantime, some admirer of the old masters will be kind enough to select from the works of any one of them, a series of examples of the same effects, and to give me a reference to the pictures, so that I may be able to compare each with each; for, as my limited knowledge of the works of Claude or Poussin does not supply me with the requisite variety of effect, I shall be grateful for assistance.

§ 1. Reasons for merely, at present, naming, without examining the particular effects of light rendered by Turner.

§ 2. Hopes of the author for assistance in the future investigation of them.

The following list, of course, does not name the hundredth part of the effects of light given by Turner; it only names those which are distinctly and markedly separate from each other, and representative each of an entire class. Ten or twelve examples, often many more, might be given of each; every one of which would display the effects of the same hour and light, modified by different circumstances of weather, situation, and character of objects subjected to them, and especially by the management of the sky; but it will be generally sufficient for our purpose to examine thoroughly one good example of each.

The prefixed letters express the direction of the light. F. front light (the sun in the centre, or near the top of the picture;) L. lateral light, the sun out of the picture on the right or left of the spectator; L. F. the light partly lateral, partly fronting the spectator, as when he is looking south, with the sun in the south-west; L. B. light partly lateral, partly behind the spectator, as when he is looking north, with the sun in the south-west.

MORNING.

EFFECTS.	NAMES OF PICTURES.
L.....An hour before sunrise in winter. Violent storm, with rain, on the sea. Light-houses seen through it.	Lowestoffe, Suffolk.
F.....An hour before sunrise. Serene sky, with light clouds. Dawn in the distance.	Vignette to Voyage of Columbus.
L.....Ten minutes before sunrise. Violent storm. Torchlight.	Fowey Harbor.
F.....Sunrise. Sun only half above the horizon. Clear sky, with light cirri.	Vignette to Human Life.
F.....Sun just disengaged from horizon. Misty, with light cirri.	Alps at Daybreak.
F.....Sun a quarter of an hour risen. Sky covered with scarlet clouds.	Castle Upnor.

EFFECTS.	NAMES OF PICTURES.
L.F...Serene sky. Sun emerging from a bank of cloud on horizon, a quarter of an hour risen.	Orford, Suffolk.
L.F...Same hour. Light mists in flakes on hillsides. Clear air.	Skiddaw.
L.F...Light flying rain-clouds gathering in valleys. Same hour.	Oakhampton.
L.B...Same hour. A night storm rising off the mountains. Dead calm.	Lake of Geneva.
L.....Sun half an hour risen. Cloudless sky.	Beaugency.
L.....Same hour. Light mists lying in the valleys.	Kirby Lonsdale.
F.....Same hour. Bright cirri. Sun dimly seen through battle smoke, with conflagration.	Hohenlinden.
L.....Sun an hour risen. Cloudless and clear.	Buckfastleigh.

NOON AND AFTERNOON.

L.B...Midday. Dead calm, with heat. Cloudless.	Corinth.
L.....Same hour. Serene and bright, with streaky clouds.	Lantern at St. Cloud.
L.....Same hour. Serene, with multitudes of the high cirrus.	Shylock, and other Venices.
L.....Bright sun, with light wind and clouds.	Richmond, Middlesex.
F.....Two o'clock. Clouds gathering for rain, with heat.	Warwick. Blenheim.
F.....Rain beginning with light clouds and wind.	Piacenza.
L.....Soft rain, with heat.	Caldron Snout Fall.
L.F...Great heat. Thunder gathering.	Malvern.
L.....Thunder breaking down, after intense heat, with furious wind.	Winchelsea.
L.....Violent rain and wind, but cool.	Llamberis, Coventry, &c.
L.F...Furious storm, with thunder.	Stonehenge, Pæstum, &c.
L.B...Thunder retiring, with rainbow. Dead calm, with heat.	Nottingham.

EFFECTS.	NAMES OF PICTURES.
L....About three o'clock, summer. Air very cool and clear. Exhausted thunder-clouds low on hills.	Bingen.
F.....Descending sunbeams through soft clouds, after rain.	Carew Castle.
L.....Afternoon, very clear, after rain. A few clouds still on horizon. Dead calm.	Saltash.
F.....Afternoon of cloudless day, with heat.	Mercury and Argus. Oberwesel. Nemi.
EVENING.	
L.....An hour before sunset. Cloudless.	Trematon Castle.
F.....Half an hour before sunset. Light clouds. Misty air.	Lake Albano. Florence.
F.....Within a quarter of an hour of sunset. Mists rising. Light cirri.	Dater Hora Quieti.
L.F...Ten minutes before sunset. Quite cloudless.	Durham.
F.....Same hour. Tumultuous spray of illumined rain-cloud.	Solomon's Pools. Slave-ship.
F.....Five minutes before sunset. Sky covered with illumined cirri.	Temeraire. Napoleon. Various vignettes.
L.B...Same hour. Serene sky. Full moon rising.	Kenilworth.
F.....Sun setting. Detached light cirri and clear air.	Amboise.
L.....Same hour. Cloudless. New moon.	Troyes.
L.F...Same hour. Heavy storm clouds. Moonrise.	First vignette. Pleasures of Memory.
L.B...Sun just set. Sky covered with clouds. New moon setting.	Caudebec.
L.B...Sun five minutes set. Strong twilight, with storm clouds. Full moonrise.	Wilderness of Engedi. Assos.
L.B...Same hour. Serene, with light clouds.	Montjan.
L.B...Same hour. Serene. New moon.	Pyramid of Caius Cestius.
L.B...Sun a quarter of an hour set. Cloudless.	Chateau de Blois.

EFFECTS.	NAMES OF PICTURES.
L.F...Sun half an hour set. Light cirri.	Clairmont.
F.....Same hour. Dead calm at sea. New moon and evening star.	Cowes.
F.....Sun three-quarters of an hour set. Moon struggling through storm clouds, over heavy sea.	Folkestone.
NIGHT.	
F.....An hour after sunset. No moon. Torchlight.	St. Julien. Tours.
F.... Same hour. Moon rising. Fire from furnaces.	Dudley.
L.F...Same hour, with storm clouds. Moon rising.	Nantes.
L.....Same hour, with light of rockets and fire.	Juliet and her Nurse.
F.....Midnight. Moonless, with light-houses.	Calais.
Same hour, with fire-light.	Burning of Parliament Houses.
F.....Ditto. Full moon. Clear air, with delicate clouds. Light-houses.	Towers of the Hevé.
F.....Ditto, with conflagration, battle smoke, and storm.	Waterloo.
F.....Ditto. Moonlight through mist. Buildings illuminated in interior.	Vignette, St. Herbert's Isle.
F.....Ditto. Full moon with halo. Light rain-clouds.	St. Denis.
F.....Full moon. Perfectly serene. Sky covered with white cirri.	Alnwick. Vignette of Rialto, & Bridge of Sighs.

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